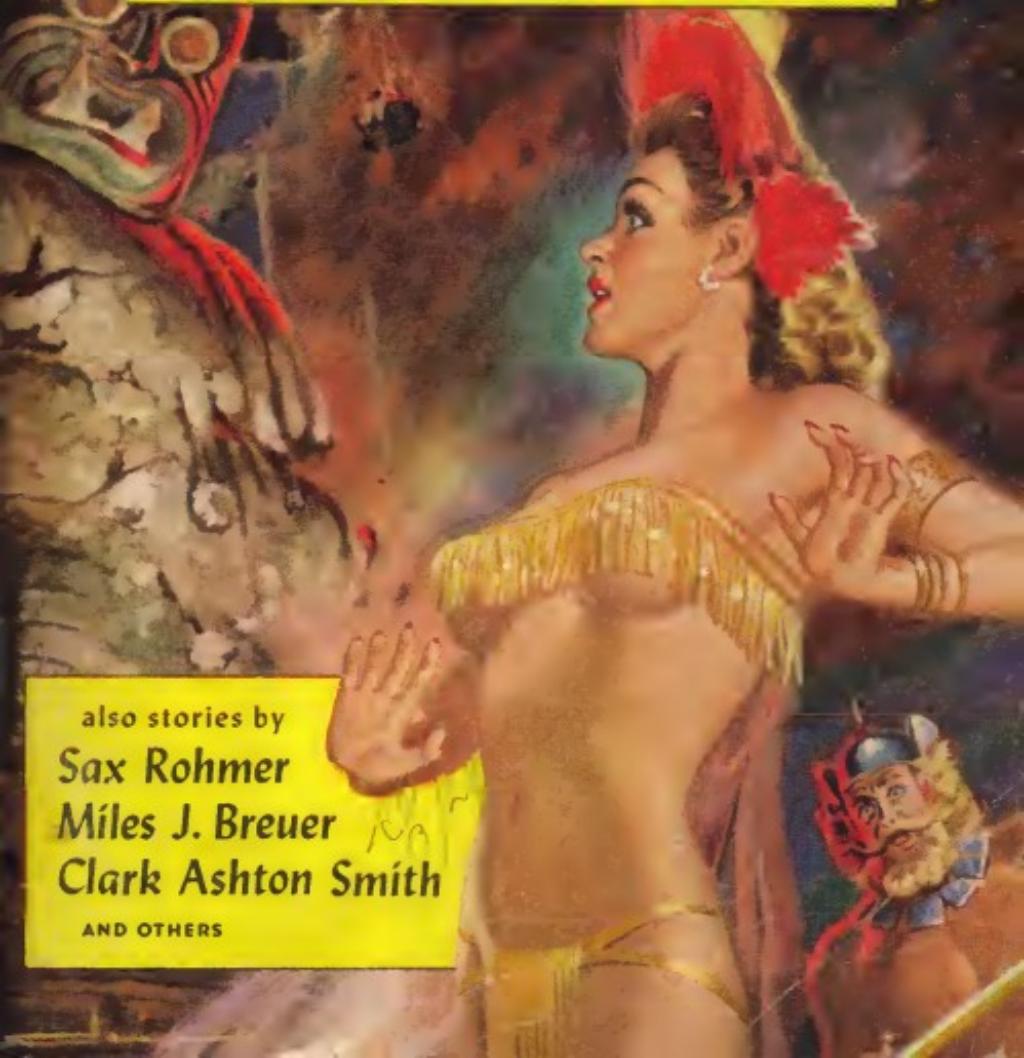


AVON
Fantasy
READER No. 12

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**THE BLONDE GODDESS OF
BAL-SAGOTH** by Robert E. Howard



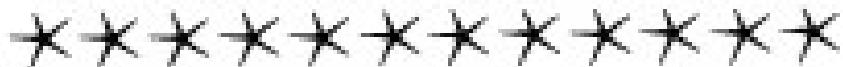
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FANTASY READER

No. 12

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WALTER KUBILIUS LORD DUNSANY
CLARK ASHTON SMITH



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The Blonde Goddess of Bal-Sagoth

by Robert E. Howard

During his unfortunately too brief lifetime, Robert E. Howard was as prolific a writer as anyone might hope for. He was that sort of natural writer to whom the need of narrating a tale did not interfere with the quality. He liked to write—and that is the secret of most good fiction. And he loved writing better than a body, guilty task of unfeeling men butting fiercely against a primitive environment. Add to that the pulsing color of the mystery and magic of the past—the darkness clasped with root and frondous legend, the human a conspiracy of supernatural power and folly; man nearly as dangerous and unpredictable as the beasts of the field, and a Robert E. Howard story is bound to be an eye of mind and exciting pearl. Here we have such a saga—a story of a Celt, barbarian's challenge to the age-old and fast-sinking end of an Atlantean realm.

J. Steel in the Storm

LEETNING dazzled the eyes of Turlogh O'Brien and his foot slipped in a smear of blood as he staggered on the reeling deck. The blinding of steel revealed the bellowing of the thunder, and screams of death cut through the roar of waves and wind. The incessant lightning flicker glinted on the shapes sprawling maimed, the gigantic hunched figures that roared and snarled like huge demons of the midnight storm, the great broken prow heaving above.

The play was quick and desperate; in the momentary illumination a ferocious bearded face shone before Turlogh, and his swift ax hacked out, splitting it to the chin. In the brief, utter blackness that followed the thud, an unseen stroke swept Turlogh's helmet from his head and he struck back blindly, feeling his ax sink into flesh, and hearing a man howl. Again the fits of the raging skies sprung, showing the Gael the ring of savage fangs, the hedge of gleaming steel that hemmed him in.

Back against the rearmost Turlogh parried and snarled; then through the madness of the fray a great voice thundered, and in a blinding instant the Gael caught a glimpse of a giant form—a strangely familiar face. Then the world crashed into fire-shot blackness.

Consciousness returned slowly. Turlogh was first aware of a swaying, rocking motion of his whole body which he could not check. Then a dull throbbing in his head rocked him and he sought to raise his

hands to it. Then it was he realized he was bound hand and foot—not an altogether new experience. Clearing sight showed him that he was tied to the mast of the dragon ship whose warriors had struck him down. Why they had spared him, he could not understand, because if they knew him at all, they knew him to be an outlaw—an outlaw from his clan, who would pay no ransom to save him from the very pits of Hell.

The wind had fallen greatly but a heavy sea was flowing, which tossed the long ship like a chip from gulf-like trough to foaming crest. A round silver moon, peering through broken clouds, lighted the tossing billows. The Gael, raised on the wild west coast of Ireland, knew that the seaport ship was crippled. He could tell it by the way she labored, plowing deep into the spume, heeling to the left of the surge. Well, the tempest which had been raging on these southern waters had been enough to damage even such staunch craft as these Vikings built.

The same gale had caught the French vessel on which Turlogh had been a passenger, driving her off her course and far southward. Days and nights had been a blind, howling cloudbank in which the ship had been hauled flying like a wounded bird before the storm. And in the very nick of the tempest a bedrid pony had loosed in the yard above the lower, broader craft, and the grappling iron had sunk in. Surely these Normans were wolves and the blood lust that burned in their hearts was not human. In the tempest and roar of the storm they leaped howling to the onslaught, and while the raging heavens lashed their full wrath upon them, and each shock of the frenzied waves threatened to engulf both vessels, these sea-wolves glutted their fury to the utmost—true sons of the sea, whose wildest rages found echo in their own bosoms. It had been a slaughter rather than a fight—the Gael had been the only fighting man aboard the doomed ship—and now he remembered the strange familiarity of the face he had glimpsed just before he was struck down. Who—?

"Good lad, my bold Doloremus, it's long since we met!"

Turlogh stared at the man who stood before him, feet braced to the listing of the deck. He was of huge stature, a good half head taller than Turlogh who stood well above six feet. His legs were like columns, his arms like oak and iron. His beard was of snap gold, matching the massive armbands he wore. A short of scale mail added to his war-like appearance as the leather beltact seemed to encircle his height. But there was no wrath in the calm gray eyes which gared tranquilly into the unsmiling blue eyes of the Gael.

"Aithslane, the Saxon!"

"Aye—it's been a long day since you give me this," the giant indicated a thin white scar on his temple. "We seem fated to meet on nights of fury—we first crossed steel the night you banished Thorlef's

skull. Then I fell before your ax and you saved me from Boogar's Picts—alone of all the folk who followed Thorfel. Tonight it was I who struck you down." He touched the great two-handed sword strapped to his shoulders and Turlogh cursed.

"Say revile me not," said Athelstane with a pained expression. "I could have slain you in the press—I struck with the flat, but knowing you high have earned hard skulls, I struck with both hands. You have been powerless for hours. Leidhrog would have slain you with the rest of the merchant ship's crew but I claimed your life. But the Vikings would only agree to spare you on condition that you be bound to the mast. They know you of old."

"Where are we?"

"Ask me not. The storm bless us far out of our course. We were sailing to harry the coasts of Spain. When chance threw us in with your vessel, of course we seized the opportunity, but there was want of spoil. Now we are racing with the sea-floe, unknown. The silver sweep is crippled and the whole ship fumed. We may be riding the very rim of the world for aught I know. Swear to join us and I will loose you."

"Swear to join the hosts of Hell!" snarled Turlogh. "Rather will I go down with the ship and sleep for ever under the green waters, bound to this mast. My only regret is that I cannot send more sea-wolves to join the bound-in-odd I have already sent to Purgatory!"

"Well, well," said Athelstane tolerantly, "a man must eat—here—I will loose your hands at least—now, set your teeth into this joint of meat."

Turlogh beat his head to the great joint and tore at it ravenously. The Saxon watched him a moment, then turned away. A strange man, reflected Turlogh, this renegade Saxon who hunted with the wolf-pack of the North—a savage warior in battle, but with fibers of kindness in his make-up which set him apart from the men with whom he consorted.

The ship rocked on blindly in the night, and Athelstane, returning with a great horn of foaming ale, remarked on the fact that the clouds were gathering again, obscuring the scuttling face of the sea. He left the Gaelf's hands unhampered but Turlogh was held fast to the mast by cords about leg and body. The sailors paid no heed to their passenger; they were too much occupied in keeping their crippled ship from going down under their feet.

At last Turlogh believed he could catch at times a deep marlin above the wash of the waves. This grew in volume, and even as the dollar-eyed Norwester heard it, the ship leaped like a spined horse, straining in every fiber. As by magic, the clouds, lightning for dawn, rolled away on each side, showing a wild waste of tossing gray waters, and a long line of breakers dead ahead. Beyond the frothing madness of the reefs loomed land, apparently an island. The roaring

increased to deviling proportions, as the long ship, caught in the tide rip, raced headlong to her doom. Turlogh saw Lodlorg rushing about, his long beard flowing in the wind as he brawdished his fists and bellowed battle commands. Athelstan came running across the deck.

"Little chance for any of us," he growled as he cut the Gael's bonds, "but you shall have as much as the rest——"

Turlogh sprang free. "Where is my ax?"

"There in that weapon-rack. But Thor's blood, man," marvelled the big Saxon, "you won't burden yourself now——"

Turlogh had snatched the ax and confidence flowed like wine through his veins at the familiar feel of the slim, graceful shaft. His ax was as much a part of him as his right hand; if by malice dir he wished to die with it in his grip. He hastily slung it to his girdle. All armor had been stripped from him when he had been captured.

"There are sharks in these waters," said Athelstan, preparing to doff his scale-mail. "If we have to swim——"

The ship struck with a crash that snapped her masts and shivered her prow like glass. Her dragon head shot high in the air and men tumbled like troopes from her slanted deck. A moment she poised, shuddering like a live thing, then slid from the hidden reef and went down in a blinding shower of spray.

Turlogh had left the deck in a long dive that carried him clear. Now he rose in the turbulent, fought the waves for a mad moment, then caught a piece of wreckage that the breakers flung up. As he clambered across this, a shape bumped against him and went down again. Turlogh plunged his arm deep, caught a sword-belt and heaved the man up and on his makeshift raft. For in that instant he had recognized the Saxon, Athelstan, still burdened with the armor he had not had time to remove. The man seemed dazed. He lay limp, hands clasped.

Turlogh remembered that ride through the breakers as a chaotic nightmare. The tide took them though, plunging their frail craft into the depths, then flinging them into the skies. There was naught to do but hold on and trust to luck. And Turlogh held on, gripping the Saxon with one hand and their raft with the other, while it seemed his fingers would crack with the strain. Again and again they were almost swamped, then by some miracle they were through, riding in water comparatively calm and Turlogh saw a leviathan fin cutting the surface a yard away. It swirled in and Turlogh cursing his ax and struck. Red dyed the water instantly and a rush of sinuous shapes made the craft rock. While the sharks tore their brother, Turlogh, paddling with his hands, waded the rude raft where until he could feel the bottom. He waded to the beach, half carrying the Saxon, then, iron though he was, Turlogh O'Brien sank down, exhausted and soon slept soundly.

2. Gods from the Abyss

Turlough did not sleep long. When he awoke the sun was just risen above the horizon. The Gael rose, feeling refreshed as if he had slept the whole night through, and looked about him. The broad white beach sloped gently from the water to a waving expanse of gigantic trees. There seemed no underbrush, but so close together were the huge boulders, his sight could not pierce into the jungle. Athelstane was standing some distance away on a spit of sand that ran out into the sea. The huge Saxon leaned on his great sword and gazed out toward the reefs.

Here and there on the beach lay the stiff figures that had been washed ashore. A sudden snarl of satisfaction broke from Turlough's lips. Here at his very feet was a gift from the gods; a dead Viking lay there, fully armored in the helmet and mail shirt he had not had time to doff when the ship foundered, and Turlough saw they were his own. Even the round light buckler strapped to the Norseman's back was his. Turlough did pause to wonder how all his accoutrements had come into the possession of one man, but stripped the dead and donned the plain round helmet and the shirt of black chain mail. Thus armed he went up the beach toward Athelstane, his eyes gleaming unpleasantly.

The Saxon turned as he approached. "Hail to you, Gael," he greeted, "We be all of Lodiberg's ship-people left alive. The hungry green sea drank them all. By Thor, I owe my life to you! What with the weight of my mail, and the crack my skull got on the rail, I had most certainly been food for the sharks but for you. It all seems like a dream now."

"You saved my life," snarled Turlough, "I saved yours. Now the debt is paid, the accounts are squared, so up with your sword and let us make an end."

Athelstane stared. "You wish to fight me? Why—what—?"

"I hate your breed as I hate Sates!" roared the Gael, a ring of madness in his blazing eyes. "Your wolves have ravaged my people for five hundred years! The smoking ruins of the Southland, the seas of spilled blood call for vengeance! The screams of a thousand ravished girls are ringing in my ears, night and day! Would that the North had but a single breast for my ax to cleave!"

"But I am no Norman," rumbled the giant in warning.

"The more shame to you, renegade," raved the madbreed Gael, "Defend yourself lest I cut you down in cold blood!"

"This is not to my liking," protested Athelstane, lifting his mighty blade, his gray eyes serious but unafraid, "Men speak truly who say there is madness in you."

Words ceased as the men prepared to go into deadly action. The Gael approached his foe, crouching panther-like, eyes ablaze. The

Saxon waited the onslaught, feet braced wide apart, sword held high in both hands. It was Turlogh's ax and shield against Athelstane's two-handed sword, in a contest one stroke might end either way. Like two great jungle beasts they played their deadly, wary game, then—

Even as Turlogh's muscles tensed for the death- leap, a fearful sound split the silence! Both men started and recoiled. From the depths of the forest behind them rose a ghastly and inhuman scream. Still, yet of great volume, it rose higher and higher until it ceased at the highest pitch, like the triumph of a demon, like the cry of some grisly ogre gloating over his human prey.

"Thou's blood!" gasped the Saxon, letting his sword-point fall. "What was that?"

Turlogh shook his head. Even his iron nerve was slightly shaken. "Some fiend of the forest. This is a strange land in a strange sea. Mayhap Satan himself reigns here and it is the gate to Hell!"

Athelstane looked uncertain. He was more pagan than Christian and his devils were heathen devils. But they were none the less grim for that.

"Well," said he, "let us drop our quarrel until we see what it may be. Two blades are better than one, whether for man or devil—"

A wild shriek cut him short. This time it was a human voice, blood-chilling as its terror and despair. Simultaneously came the swift patter of feet and the lumbering rush of some heavy body among the trees. The warriors whirled toward the sound, and out of the deep shadows a half-naked woman came flying like a white leaf blown on the wind. Her loose hair streamed like a flame of gold behind her, her white limbs flashed in the morning sun; her eyes blazed with fiendish terror. And beyond her—

Even Turlogh's hair stood up. The thing that pursued the fleeing girl was neither man nor beast. In form it was like a bird, but such a bird as the rest of the world had not seen for many an age. Some twelve feet high it towered, and its evil head with the wicked red eyes and cruel crooked beak was as big as a horse's head. The long arched neck was thicker than a man's thigh and the huge taloned feet could have gripped the fleeing woman as an eagle grips a sparrow.

This much Turlogh saw in one glance as he sprang between the monster and its prey who sank down with a cry on the beach. It leaped above him like a mountain of death and the evil beak darted down, denting the shield he raised and staggering him with the impact. At the same instant he struck, but the keen ax sank harmlessly into a cushioning mass of spiky brambles. Again the beak flashed at him and his side-long leap saved his life by a hair's breadth. And then Athelstane ran on, and bracing his feet wide, swung his great sword with both hands and all his strength. The mighty blade sliced through one of the tree-like legs below the knee, and with an abhor-

last scratch, the monster sank on its side, flapping its short heavy wings wildly. Turlogh drove the back-spine of his ax between the glowering red eyes and the gigantic head kicked convulsively and lay still.

"There's blood!" Athelstane's gray eyes were blazing with battle lust. "Truly we've come to the rim of the world——"

"Watch the forest lest another come forth," snapped Turlogh, running to the woman who had scrambled to her feet and stood panting, eyes wide with wonder. She was a splendid young animal, tall, slim-limbed, slim and shapely. Her only garment was a sheer bit of silk looping carelessly about her hips. But though the softness of her dress suggested the savage, her skin was snowy white, her loose hair of purest gold and her eyes gray. Now she spoke hastily, strenuously, in the tongue of the Norse, as if she had not so spoken at years.

"You—who are you men? Whence come you? What do you on the Isle of the Gods?"

"There's blood!" mumbled the Saxon. "She's of our own kind!"

"Not mine!" snapped Turlogh, unable even in that moment to forget his hate for the people of the North.

The girl looked curiously at the two. "The world must have changed greatly since I left it," said she, evidently in full control of herself once more, "else how is it that wolf and wild bull meet together? By your black hair, you are a God, and you, big man, have a star in your speech that can be naught but Saxon."

"We are two outcasts," answered Turlogh. "Now see those dried men bring the strand! They were the crew of the dragon ship which bore us here, storm-driven. This man, Athelstane, may of Weavers, was a swordman on that ship and I was a captive. I am Turlogh Dubh, once a chief of Clan na O'Brien. Who are you and what land is this?"

"This is the oldest land in the world," answered the girl. "Bosporus, Egypt, Cathay are as but infants beside it. I am Brushfield, daughter of Raen Thorsfi's son, of the Orkneys, and until a few days ago, queen of this ancient kingdom."

Turlogh looked uncertainly at Athelstane. This sounded like sorcery.

"After what we have just seen," mumbled the giant, "I am ready to believe anything. But are you in truth Raen Thorsfi's son's stolen child?"

"Ayeh!" cried the girl. "I am that one! I was stolen when Tostig the Mad raided the Orkneys and burned Raen's steading in the absence of its master——"

"And then Tostig vanished from the face of the earth—or the sea!" interrupted Athelstane. "He was in truth a madman. I strolled with him for a ship-harrying many years ago when I was but a youth."

"And his madness cast me on this island," answered Brushfield. "For after he had harried the shores of England, the fire in his brain drove him out into unknown seas—south and south and ever south until even

the fierce wolves he had maintained. Then a storm drove us on powder reef, though at another part, rending the dragon ship even as yours was rended last night. Tostig and all his strong men perished in the waves, but I clung to pieces of wreckage and a whelm of the gods cast me ashore, half dead. I was fifteen years old. That was ten years ago.

"I found a strange terrible people dwelling here, a brown-skinned folk who knew many dark secrets of magic. They found me lying senseless on the beach and because I was the first white human they had ever seen, their priests divined that I was a goddess given them by the sea, whom they worship. So they put me in the temple with the rest of their curious gods and did reverence to me. And their high-priest, old Gothan—cursed be his name!—taught me many strange and fearful things. Soon I learned their language and much of their priests' inner mysteries. And as I grew into womanhood the desire for power stoked in me, for the people of the North are made to rule thefolk of the world, and it is not for the daughter of a sea-king to sit merely in a temple and accept the offerings of fruit and flowers and human sacrifices!"

She stopped for a moment, eyes blazing. Truly, she looked a worthy daughter of the fierce race she claimed.

"Well," she continued, "there was one who loved me—Kotar, a young chief. With him I plotted and at last I rose and flung off the yoke of old Gothan. That was a wild season of plot and counter-plot, intrigue, rebellion and red carnage! Men and women died like flies and the streets of Bal-Sagoth ran red—but in the end we triumphed, Kotar and I! The dynasty of Angur came to an end on a night of blood and fury and I reigned supreme on the Isle of the Gods, queen and goddess!"

She had drawn herself up to her full height, her beautiful face alight with fierce pride, her bosom heaving. Turleg was at once fascinated and repelled. He had seen rulers rise and fall, and between the lines of her brief narrative he read the bloodshed and carnage, the cruelty and the treachery—sensing the basic ruthlessness of this girl-woman.

"But if you were queen," he asked, "how is it that we find you hunted through the forests of your domain by this monster, like a runaway serving wench?"

Bronfield bit her lip and an angry flush mounted to her cheeks. "What is it that brings down every woman, whatever her station? I trusted a man—Kotar, my lover, with whom I shared my rule. He betrayed me; after I had raised him to the highest power in the kingdom, next to my own, I found he secretly made love to another girl. I killed them both!"

Turleg smiled coldly. "You are a true Bronfield! And then what?" "Kotar was loved by the people. Old Gothan stirred them up. I

made my greatest mistake when I let that old one live. Yet I dared not slay him. Well, Gothian rose against me, as I had risen against him, and the warriors rebelled, slaying those who stood faithful to me. Me they took captive but dared not kill, for after all, I was a goddess, they believed. So before dawn, fearing the people would change their minds again and restore me to power, Gothian had me taken to the lagoon which separates this part of the island from the other. The priests rowed me across the lagoon and left me, naked and helpless, to my fate."

"And that fate was--this?" Athelstone touched the huge carcass with his foot.

Bronhild shuddered. "Many ages ago there were many of these monsters on the isle, the legends say. They swarmed on the people of Bal-Sagoth and devoured them by hundreds. But at last all were exterminated on the main part of the isle and on this side of the lagoon all died but this one, who has abided here for centuries. In the old times hosts of men came against him, but he was greatest of all the devil-lords and he slew all who fought him. So the priests made a god of him and left this part of the island to him. None comes here except those brought as sacrifices--as I was. He could not cross to the main island, because the lagoon swims with great sharks which would rend even him to pieces."

"For a while I chased him, stealing among the trees, but at last he spied me out--and you know the rest. I owe my life to you. Now what will you do with me?"

Athelstone looked at Turlugh and Turlugh shrugged. "What can we do, save stay in this forest?"

"I will tell you!" the girl cried in a ringing voice, her eyes blazing anew to the swift working of her keen brain. "There is an old legend among this people--that men of iron will come out of the sea and the city of Bal-Sagoth will fall! You, with your mail and helmets, will seem as iron men to these folk who know nothing of iron! You have slain Groth-golla the hand-god--you have come out of the sea as did I--the people will look on you as gods. Come with me and aid me to win back my kingdom! You shall be my right-hand man and I will keep honors on you! Fine garments, gracious palaces, fairest girls shall be yours!"

Her promises did firm Turlugh's mind without leaving an imprint, but the mad splendor of the proposal intrigued him. Strongly he desired to look on this strange city of which Bronhild spoke, and the thought of two virgines and one girl pitted against a whole nation for a crown stirred the utmost depths of his knight-errant Celtic soul.

"It is well," said he. "And what of you, Athelstone?"

"My belly is empty," growled the giant. "Lead me to where there is food and I'll hew my way to it, through a hedge of priests and warriors."

"Lead us to this city!" said Turlogh to Brundild.

"Hail!" she cried flinging her white arms high in wild exultation. "Now let Gothan and Sha and Celka tremble! With ye at my side I'll win back the crown they tore from me, and this time I'll not spare my enemy! I'll hurl old Gothan from the highest battlement, though the bewilfaring of his demons shake the very bowels of the earth! And we shall see if the god Gal-morh shall stand against the sword that cut Croth-golka's leg from under him. Now hew the head from this carcass that the people may know you have overcome the hind-god. Now follow me, for the sun mounts the sky and I would sleep in my own palace tonight!"

The three passed into the shadow of the mighty forest. The interlocking branches, hundreds of feet above their heads, made dim and strange such sunlight as filtered through. No life was seen except for an occasional gayly-hued bird or a large ape. These beasts, Brundild said, were survivors of another age, harmless except when attacked. Presently the growth changed somewhat, the trees thinned and became smaller and fruit of many kinds was seen among the branches. Brundild told the warriors which to pluck and eat as they walked along. Turlogh was quite satisfied with the fruit, but Athelstane, though he ate心nously, did so with scant relish. Fruit was light sustenance to a man used to such solid stuff as formed his regular diet. Even among the gluttonous Danes the Saxon's capacity for beef and ale was admired.

"Look!" cried Brundild sharply, halting and pointing. "The spires of Bal-Sagith!"

Through the trees the warriors caught a glimmer, white and shimmering, and apparently far away. There was an illusory impression of towering battlements, high in the air, with heavy clouds hovering about them. The sight woke strange dreams in the mystic depths of the Gael's soul, and even Athelstane was silent as if he too were struck by the pagan beauty and mystery of the scene.

So they progressed through the forest, now losing sight of the distant city as tree tops obstructed the view, now seeing it again. And at last they came out on the low sheltering banks of a broad blue lagoon and the full beauty of the landscape burst upon their eyes. From the opposite shores the country sloped upward in long gentle undulations which broke like great slow waves at the foot of a range of blue hills a few miles away. These wide swells were covered with deep grass and many groves of trees, while such as way on either hand there was seen curving away into the distance the strip of thick forest which Brundild had belted the whole island. And among those blue dreaming hills brooded the age-old city of Bal-Sagith, its white walls and sapphire towers clear-cut against the morning sky. The suggestion of great distance had been an illusion.

"Is that not a kingdom worth fighting for?" cried Brundild, her voice vibrant. "Swift now—let us bind this dry wood together for a raft. We could not live an instant swimming in that shark-haunted water."

At that instant a figure leaped up from the tall grass on the other shore—a naked, brown-skinned man who stared for a moment, agape. Then as Athelstane shouted and held up the grisly head of Groth-golka, the fellow gave a startled cry and raced away like an antelope.

"A slave Gothan left to see if I tried to swim the lagoon," said Brundild with angry satisfaction. "Let him run to the city and tell them—but let us make haste and cross the lagoon before Gothan can arrive and dispute our passage."

Tislaugh and Athelstane were already busy. A number of dead trees lay about and these they stripped of their branches and bound together with long vines. In a short time they had built a raft, crude and clumsy, but capable of bearing them across the lagoon. Brundild gave a frank sigh of relief when they stepped on the other shore.

"Let us go straight to the city," said she. "The slave has reached it ere now and they will be watching us from the walls. A bold course is our only one. Thor's hammer, but I'd like to see Gothan's face when the slave tells him Brundild is returning with two strange warriors and the head of him to whom she was given as sacrifice!"

"Why did you not kill Gothan when you had the power?" asked Athelstane.

She shook her head, her eyes clouding with something akin to fear. "Easier said than done. Half the people hate Gothan, half love him, and all fear him. The most ancient ways of the city say that he was old when they were babies. The people believe him to be more god than priest, and I myself have seen him do terrible and mysterious things, beyond the power of a common man."

"Nay, when I was but a puppet in his hands, I came only to the outer fringe of his mysteries, yet I have looked on sights that loose my blood. I have seen strange shadows fit along the midnight walls, and groping along black subterranean corridors in the dead of night I have heard unfollowed sounds and have felt the presence of hideous beings. And once I heard the gurdy slavering bellowings of the nameless Thing Gothan has chained deep in the bowels of the hills on which rests the city of Bal-Sagoth."

Brundild shuddered.

"There are many gods in Bal-Sagoth, but the greatest of all is Golgoruth, the god of darkness who sits forever in the Temple of Shadows. When I overthrew the power of Gothan, I forbade men to worship Golgoruth, and made the priests had, as the one true deity, A-ala, the daughter of the sea—myself. I had strong men take heavy hammers and smite the image of Golgoruth, but their blows only disfigured the hammers and gave strange hurts to the men who wielded them. Gol-

goroth was indestructible and showed no mor. So I desisted and ghot the doors of the Temple of Shadow which were opened only when I was overthrown and Goroth, who had been skulking in the secret places of the city, came again into his own. Then Gol-goroth reigned again in his full terror and the idols of A-ala were overthrown in the Temple of the Sea, and the priests of A-ala died howling on the red-stained altar before the black god. But now we shall see!"

"Surely you are a very Valkyrie," muttered Athelstane. "But three against a nation is great odds—especially such a people as this, who must assuredly be all witches and sorcerers."

"Bah!" cried Brumhlid contemptuously, "there are many successors, it is true, but though the people are strange to us, they are mere fools in their own way, as are all nations. When Goroth led me captive down the streets they spit on me. Now watch them turn on Ska, the new king Goroth has given them, when it scorns my star does agoin! But now we approach the city gates—he bold but wary!"

They had descended the long swelling slopes and were not far from the walls which rose interminably upward. Surely, thought Turkagh, heathen gods built this city. The walls seemed of marble and with their fretted battlements and slim watch-towers, dwarfed the memory of such cities as Rome, Damascus and Byzantium. A broad white winding road led up from the lower levels to the plateau before the gates and as they came up the road, the three adventurers felt hundreds of hidden eyes fixed on them with fierce intensity. The walls seemed deserted; it might have been a dead city. But the impact of those staring eyes was felt.

Now they stood before the massive gates, which to the arrested eyes of the warriors seemed to be of chased silver.

"Here is an emperors ransom!" muttered Athelstane, eyes ablaze. "Thor's blood, if we had but a stout band of reavers and a ship to carry away the phaeder!"

"Smite on the gate and then step back, lest something fall upon you," said Brumhlid, and the thunder of Turkagh's ax on the portals woke the echoes in the sleeping hills.

The three then fell back a few paces and suddenly the mighty gates swung inward and a strange conourse of people stood revealed. The two white warriors looked on a pageant of barbican grandeur. A throng of tall, slim, brown-skinned men stood in the gates. Their only garments were loincloths of silk, the fine work of which contrasted strangely with the near nudity of the women. Tall waving plumes of many colors decked their heads, and amulets and leglets of gold and silver, encrusted with gleaming gems, completed their ornamentation. Armor they wore none, but each carried a light shield on his left arm, made of hard wood, highly polished, and beaded with silver. Their weapons were slim-bladed spears, light hatchets and slender daggers.

all bladed with fine steel. Evidently these warriors depended more on speed and skill than on brute force.

At the front of this band stood three men who instantly commanded attention. One was a lean hawk-faced warrior, almost as tall as Athelstane, who wore about his neck a great golden chain from which was suspended a curious symbol in pale. One of the other men was young, evil-eyed, an unpleasing mot of colors in the mantle of parrot-feathers which swung from his shoulders. The third man had nothing to set him apart from the rest save his own strange personality. He wore no mantle, bore no weapons. His only garment was a plain loincloth. He was very old; he alone of all the throng was bearded, and his beard was as white as the long hair which fell about his shoulders. He was very tall and very lean, and his great dark eyes blazed as from a hidden fire. Turlogh knew without being told that this man was Gothan, priest of the Black God. The ancient exuded a very aura of age and mystery. His great eyes were like windows of some forgotten temple, behind which passed like ghosts his dark and terrible thoughts. Turlogh sensed that Gothan had delved too deep in forbidden secrets to remain altogether human. He had passed through doors that had cut him off from the dreams, desires and emotions of ordinary mortals. Looking into those unwinking orbs Turlogh felt his skin crawl, as if he had looked into the eyes of a great serpent.

Now a glance upward showed that the walls were thronged with silent, dark-eyed folk. The stage was set; all was in readiness for the swift red drama. Turlogh felt his pulse quicken with fierce excitement and Athelstane's eyes began to glow with ferocious light.

Brunhild stepped forward boldly, head high, her splendid figure vibrant. The white warriors naturally could not understand what passed between her and the others, except as they read from gestures and expressions, but later Brunhild narrated the conversation almost word for word.

"Well, people of Bal-Sagoth," said she, spilling her words slowly, "what would have you for your goddess, whom you mocked and reviled?"

"What will you have, false one?" exclaimed the tall man, Ska, the king set up by Gothan, "you who mocked at the customs of our ancestors, defied the laws of Bal-Sagoth, which are older than the world, murdered your lover and defiled the shrine of Gal-garoth? You were doomed by law, king and god and placed in the grim forest beyond the Lagoon—"

"And I, who am likewise a goddess and greater than any god," answered Brunhild mockingly, "am reborn from the realm of honor with the head of Grotto-golka!"

At a word from her, Athelstane held up the great beaked head, and

a low whispering ran about the battlements, tense with fear and bewilderment.

"Who are these men?" Ska bent a worried frown on the two warriors.

"They are iron men who have come out of the sea!" answered Brunhild in a clear voice that earned her, "the beings who have come in response to the old prophecy, to overthrow the city of Bal-Sageth, whose people are traitors and whose priests are false!"

At these words the fearful murmur broke out afresh all up and down the line of the walls, till Gothan lifted his vulture-head and the people fell silent and shrank before the icy stare of his terrible eyes.

Ska glared bewilderedly, his ambition struggling with his superstitious fears.

Turlough, looking closely at Gothan, believed that he read beneath the inscrutable mask of the old priest's face. For all his inhuman wisdom, Gothan had his limitations. This sudden return of one he thought well disposed of, and the appearance of the white-skinned giants accompanying her, had caught Gothan off his guard. Turlough believed, rightly. There had been no time to properly prepare for their reception. The people had already begun to march in the streets against the severity of Ska's brief rule. They had always believed in Brunhild's divinity; now that she returned with two tall men of her own hue, bearing the grim trophy that marked the conquest of another of their gods, the people were wavering. Any small thing might turn the tide either way.

"People of Bal-Sageth!" shouted Brunhild suddenly, springing back and flinging her arms high, gazing full into the faces that looked down at her. "I bid you avert your doom before it is too late! You cast me out and spat on me, you turned to darker gods than I! Yet all this will I forgive if you return and do obeisance to me! Once you reviled me—you called me bloody and cruel! True, I was a hard mistress—but has Ska been an easy master? You said I lashed the people with whips of rwhide—has Ska struck you with garnet feathers?"

"A virgin died on my altar at the full tide of each moon—but virgins and maidens die at the weeping and the weeping, the rising and the setting of each moon, before Gol-goroth, on whose altar a fresh human heart forever bleeds! Ska is but a shark! Your real lord is Gothan, who sits above the city like a vulture! Once you were a mighty people; your galleries filled the seas. Now you are a remnant and that is dwindling fast! Fools! You will all die on the altar of Gol-goroth ere Gothan is done and he will stalk alone among the silent ruins of Bal-Sageth!"

"Look at him!" her voice rose to a scream as she lashed herself to an inspired frenzy, and even Turlough, to whom the words were meaningless, shivered. "Look at him where he stands there like an evil spirit

out of the past! He is not even human! I tell you, he is a foul ghost, whose beard is dabbled with the blood of a million butchers—an uncarnate fiend out of the mist of the ages come to destroy the people of Bal-Sagoth!

"Choose now! Rise up against that ancient devil and his blasphemous gods, receive your rightful queen and deity again and you shall regain some of your former greatness. Refuse, and the ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled and the sun will set on the silent and crumpled mass of Bal-Sagoth!"

Paid by her dynamic words, a young warrior with the insignia of a chief sprang to the parapet and shouted: "Hail to A-alal Dara with the bloody goals!"

Among the multitude many took up the shout and steel clashed as a score of fights started. The crowd on the battlements and in the streets surged and roared, while Ska glared bewildered. Brughild, fearing back her compatriots who quivered with eagerness for action of some kind, shouted: "Hold! Let no man strike a blow yet! People of Bal-Sagoth, it has been a tradition since the beginning of time that a king must fight for his crown! Let Ska cross steel with one of these warriors! If Ska wins, I will kneel before him and let him strike off my head! If Ska loses, then you shall accept me as your rightful queen and goddess!"

A great roar of approval went up from the walls as the people unbraided their braids, glad enough to shift the responsibility to their rulers.

"Will you fight, Ska?" asked Brughild, turning to the king mockingly. "Or will you give me your head without further argument?"

"Shut!" howled Ska, driven to madness. "I will take the skulls of these fools for drinking-cups, and then I will end you between two bent trees!"

Gotham laid a hand on his arm and whispered in his ear, but Ska had reached the point where he was deaf to all but his fury. His abased ambition, he had found, had faded to the mere part of a puppet dancing on Gotham's string; now even the hollow humble of his kingship was slipping from him and this wench mocked him to his face before his people. Ska went, to all practical effects, stark mad.

Brughild turned to her two allies. "One of you must fight Ska."

"Let me be the one!" urged Terlogh, eyes dancing with eager battle-hust. "He has the look of a man quick as a wildcat, and Athirstang, while a very bull for strength, is a thought slow for such work—"

"Slow!" broke in Athirstang reproachfully. "Why, Terlogh, he a man my weight—"

"Enough," Brughild interrupted. "He must choose for himself."

She spoke to Ska, who glared red-eyed for an instant, then indecisively

Athelstane, who grimmed joyfully, cast aside the bird's head and unsheathing his sword. Tunlogh swore and stepped back. The king had decided that he would have a better chance against this huge bulk of a man who looked slow, than against the black-haired tyrannic warrior, whose cat-like quickness was evident.

"This Ska is without armor," mumbled the Saxon. "Let me likewise doff my mail and helmet so that we fight on equal terms——"

"No!" cried Brundrid. "Your armor is your only chance! I tell you, this false king fights like the play of summer lightning! You will be hard put to hold your own as it is. Keep on your armor, I say!"

"Well, well," grumbled Athelstane, "I will—I will. Though I say it is scarcely fair. But let him come on and make an end of it."

The huge Saxon strode ponderously toward his foe, who warily退ed and circled away. Athelstane held his great sword in both hands before him, pointed upward, the hilt somewhat below the level of his arms, in准备 to strike a blow to right or left, or parry a sudden attack.

Ska had flung away his light shield, his fighting-sense telling him that it would be useless before the stroke of that heavy blade. In his right hand he held his thin spear as a man holds a throwing-dart, in his left a light, keen-edged hatchet. He meant to make a fast, shifty fight of it, and his tactics were good. But Ska, having never encountered arms before, made his fatal mistake in supposing it to be apparel or ornament through which his weapons would pierce.

Now he sprang in, thrusting at Athelstane's face with his spear. The Saxon parried with ease and instantly cut treacherously at Ska's leg. The king bounded high, clearing the whistling blade, and in midair he landed down at Athelstane's bent head. The light hatchet shivered to bits on the Viking's helmet and Ska sprang back out of reach with a blood-lossing howl.

And now it was Athelstane who rushed with unexpected quickness, like a charging bull, and before that terrible onslaught Ska, bewildered by the breaking of his hatchet, was caught off his guard—flat-footed. He caught a blinding glimmer of the giant leaping over him like an overwhelming wave and he sprang in, instead of out, stabbing furiously. That mistake was his last. The thrusting spear glanced harmlessly from the Saxon's mail, and in that instant the great sword sang down in a stroke the king could not evade. The force of that stroke tossed him as a man is tossed by a plunging bell. A dozen feet away fell Ska, king of Bal Sageth, to die shattered and dead in a ghastly welter of blood and entrails. The throng gaped, struck silent by the powers of that deed.

"How off his head!" cried Brundrid, her eyes flaring as she clenched her hand so that the nail bit into the palms. "Impale that curmuck's

head on your sword-point so that we may carry it through the city gates with us as a token of victory!"

But Athelstan shook his head, cleansing his blade: "Nay, he was a brave man and I will not smite his corpse. It is no great feat I have done, for he was naked and I full-armed. Else it is in my mind, the brawl had gone differently."

Turkagh glanced at the people on the walls. They had recovered from their astonishment and now a vast roar went up: "A-ah! Hail to the true godhus!" And the warriors in the gateway dropped to their knees and bowed their foreheads to the dust before Brundil, who stood proudly erect, bosom heaving with fierce triumph. Truly, thought Turkagh, she is more than a queen—she is a shrill woman, a Valkyrie, as Athelstan said.

Now she stepped aside and, unringing the golden chain with its pale symbol from the dead neck of Ska, held it in high and shouted: "People of Bal-Sagrat, you have seen how your false king died before this golden braided giant who, being of iron, shows no single cut! Choose now—do you receive me of your own free will?"

"Aye, we do!" the multitude answered in a great shout; "Return to your people, oh mighty and all-powerful queen!"

Brundil smiled sardonically. "Come," said she to the warriors, "they are lashing themselves into a very frenzy of love and loyalty, having already forgotten their treachery. The memory of the mob is short!"

Aye, thought Turkagh, as at Brundil's side he saw the Saros passed through the mighty gates between files of prostate chieftains; aye, the memory of the mob is very short. But a few days have passed since they were yelling as wildly for Ska the liberator—scant hours had passed since Ska sat enthroned, master of life and death, and the people bowed before his feet. Now—Turkagh glanced at the mangled corpse which lay desecrated and forgotten before the silver gates. The shadow of a circling vulture fell across it. The clamor of the multitude filled Turkagh's ears and he scolded a bitter smile.

The great gates closed behind the three adventurers and Turkagh saw a broad white street stretching away in front of him. Other lower streets radiated from this one. The two warriors caught a jumbled and chaotic impression of great white stone buildings, shoulderling each other, of sky-lifting towers and broad state-flecked palaces. Turkagh knew there must be an ordered system by which the city was laid out, but to him all seemed a waste of stone and metal and polished wood, without plan or reason. His baffled eyes sought the street again.

Far up the street extended a mass of humanity, from which rose a rhythmic thunder of sound. Thousands of naked, gayly plumed men and women knocked there, bending forward to touch the marble flags with their foreheads, then swaying back with an upward flinging of

their arms, all moving in perfect unison like the bending and rising of tall grass before the wind. And in time to their bowing they lifted a uninterrupted chant that sank and swelled in a frenzy of ecstasy. So her wayward people welcomed back the goddess Aala.

Just within the gates Brumhild stopped and there came to her the young chief who had first raised the shout of revolt upon the walls. He knelt and kissed her bare feet, saying: "Oh great queen and goddess, thou knowest Zamaa was ever faithful to thee! Thou knowest how I fought for thee and barely escaped the altar of Gol-goth for thy sake!"

"Thou hast indeed been faithful, Zamaa," answered Brumhild in the stilted language required for such occasions, "nor shall thy fidelity go unrewarded. Henceforth thou art commander of my own bodyguards." Then in a lower voice she added: "Gather a band from your own retainers and from those who have espoused my cause all along, and bring them to the palace. I do not trust the people any more than I have told."

Suddenly Athelstan, not understanding this conversation, broke in: "Where is the old one with the beard?"

Tuilegh started and gazed around. He had almost forgotten the wizard. He had not seen him go—yet he was gone! Brumhild laughed rudely.

"He's stolen away to lured more trouble in the shadows. He and Golka vanished when Ska fell. He has secret ways of coming and going and none may stay him. Forget him for the time being. Fare ye well—we shall have plenty of fun soon!"

Now the clouds brought a foamy carved and highly ornamented palanquin carried by two strong slaves, and Brumhild stepped into this, saying to her companions: "They are feared of touching you, but ask if you would be carried. I think it better that you walk, one on each side of me."

"This's blood!" mumbled Athelstan, considering the huge sword he had never sheathed, "I'm no infant! I'll split the skull of the man who dares to carry me!"

And so up the long white street went Brumhild, daughter of Rane Tharfla's son in the Qrikupi, goddess of the sea, queen of age-old Bul-Sageth. Borne by two great slaves she went, with a white giant standing on each side with bared sword, and a concourse of clerks following, while the multitude gave way to right and left, leaving a wide lane down which she passed. Golden trumpets sounded a fanfare of triumph, drums thundered, chants of worship echoed to the ringing skies. Surely in this riot of glee, this barbaric pageant of splendor, the proud soul of the North-born girl drank deep and grew drunken with imperial pride.

Athelstan's eyes glowed with simple delight at this flume of pagan

magnificence, but to the black-haired fighting man of the West, it seemed that even in the loudest clatter of triumph, the trumpet, the drum and the shouting faded away into the forgotten dust and silence of eternity. Kingdoms and empires pass away like mist from the sea, thought Turlogh, the people shout and triumph and even in the revelry of Babelzhaar's feast, the Medes break the gates of Babylon. Even now the shadow of doom is over the city and the slow tides of oblivion lap the feet of this unheeding race. So in a strange mood Turlogh O'Brien strolled beside the palanquin, and it seemed to him that he and Athelstane walked in a dead city, through throngs of dim ghosts, chasing a ghost queen.

3. The Fall of the Gods

Night had fallen on the ancient city of Bal Sagath. Turlogh, Athelstone and Brunduil sat alone in a room of the inner palace. The queen half reclined on a silver couch while the men sat on mahogany chairs, engaged in the viands that slave girls had served them on golden dishes. The walls of this room, as of all the palace, were of marble, with golden scrollwork. The ceiling was of lapis-lazuli and the floor of silver-veined marble tiles. Heavy velvet hangings decorated the walls and silken curtains, richly made divans and mahogany chairs and tables littered the room in careless profusion.

"I would give much for a horn of ale, but this wine is not sour to the palate," said Athelstane, emptying a golden flagon with relish. "Brunduil, you have deceived us. You let us understand it would take hard fighting to win back your crown—yet I have struck but one blow and my sword is thirsty as Turlogh's as which has not drunk at all. We hammered on the gates and the people fell down and worshipped with no more ado. And until a little while ago we but stood by your throne in the great palace room, while you spoke to the throngs that came and knocked their heads on the floor before you—by Thor, never have I heard such chattering and gibbering! My ears ring till now—what were they saying? And where is that old conquer Gorhan?"

"Your steel will drink deep yet, Saxon," answered the girl grimly, resting her chin on her hands and eying the warrior with deep mordant eyes. "Had you gambled with cities and crowns as I have done, you would know that seizing a throne may be easier than keeping it. Our sudden appearance with the herd gnef's head, your killing of Skia, swept the people off their feet. As for the rest—I held audience in the palace as you saw, even if you did not understand, and the people who came in bowing doves were assuring me of their unwavering loyalty—but I graciously pardoned them all, but I am so foul. When they have time to think, they will begin to gamble again. Gorhan is lurking in the shadows somewhere, plotting evil to us all, you may be sure.

This city is honeycombed with secret corridors and subterranean passages of which only the priests know. Even I, who have traversed some of them when I was Gothan's puppet, know not where to look for the secret doors, since Gothan always led me through them blindfolded.

"Just now, I think I hold the upper hand. The people look on you with more awe than they regard me. They think your armor and helmets are part of your bodies and that you are invulnerable. Did you not note them, finally touching your mail as we passed through the crowd, and the amazement on their faces as they felt the iron of it?"

"For a people so wise in some ways they are very foolish in others," said Turloch. "Who are they and whence came they?"

"They are so old," answered Brughild, "that their most ancient legends give no hint of their origin. Ages ago they were a part of a great empire which spread out over the many islands of this sea. But some of the islands sank and vanished with their cities and people. Then the red-skinned savages assailed them and isle after isle fell before them. At last only this island was left unconquered, and the people have become weaker and forgotten many ancient arts. For lack of ports to sail to, the galleys rotted by the wharves which themselves crumbled into decay. Not in the memory of man has any son of Bal-Sagoth sailed the seas. At irregular intervals the red people descend upon the Isle of the Gods, traversing the seas in their long war-canoes which bear gauding skulls on the prows. Not far away as a Viking would reckon a sea-voyage, but out of sight over the sea run lie the islands inhabited by these red men who centuries ago slaughtered the folk who dwelt there. We have always beaten them off, they cannot scale the walls, but still they come and the fear of their raid is always hovering over the isle."

"But it is not them I fear, it is Gothan, who is at this moment either slipping like a loathly serpent through his black tunnels or else brewing abominations in one of his hidden chambers. In the caves deep in the hills to which his tunnels lead, he works fearful and unholy magic. His subjects are beasts—serpents, spiders, and great apes, and men—gated capes and writhes of his own race. Deep in his grisly caverns he makes beasts of men and half-men of beasts, mingling bestial with human in ghastly creation. No man dare gaze at the horrors that have spawned in the darkness, or what shapes of terror and blasphemy have come into being during the ages. Gothan has wrought his abominations, for he is not an other man, and has discovered the secret of life everlasting. He has at least brought into foul life one creature that even he fears, the gibbering, mowing, nameless Thing he keeps chained in the furthest cavern that no human foot save his has trod. He would loose it against me if he dared. . . .

"But it grows late and I would sleep. I will sleep in the room next to this, which has no other opening than this door. Not even a slave-girl will I keep with me, for I trust none of these people fully. You shall keep this room, and though the outer door is bolted, we had better watch while the other sleeps. Zumar and his guardmen patrol the couriers outside, but I shall feel safer with two men of my own blood between me and the rest of the city."

She rose, and with a strangely lingering glance at Turlogh, entered her chamber and closed the door behind her.

Athelstane stretched and yawned. "Well, Turlogh," said he lazily, "men's fortunes are variable as the sea. Last night I was the picked marchman of a band of ravers and you a captive. This dawn we were lost outcasts springing at each other's throats. Now we are sword brothers and right-hand men to a queen. And you, I think, are destined to become a king."

"How so?"

"Why, have you not noticed the Orkney girl's eyes on you? Faith, there's more than friendship in her glances that rest on those black locks and that brown face of yours. I tell you—"

"Enough," Turlogh's voice was harsh as an old wound stung him. "Women in power are white-fanged wolves. It was the spite of a woman that—" He stopped,

"Well, well," returned Athelstane tolerantly, "there are more good women than bad ones, I know—it was the intrigues of a woman that made you an outcast. Well, we should be good comrades. I am an outlaw, too. If I should show my face in Wessex I would soon be looking down on the countryside from a stout oak limb."

"What drove you out on the Viking path? So far have the Saxons forgotten the ocean-ways that King Alfred was obliged to hire Frisian rowers to build and man his fleet when he fought the Danes."

Athelstane shrugged his mighty shoulders and began whetting his dirk.

"I had a yearning for the sea even when I was a shock-headed child in Wessex. I was still a youth when I killed a young earl and fled the vengeance of his people. I found refuge in the Orkneys and the ways of the Vikings were more to my liking than the ways of my own blood. But I came back to fight against Cænute, and when England submitted to his rule, he gave me command of his house-carls. That made the Danes jealous because of the honor given a Saxon who had fought against them, and the Saxons remembered I had left Wessex under a cloud once, and murmured that I was overly-well favored by the conqueror. Well, there was a Saxon thane and a Danish girl who one night at least assailed me with fiery words and I forgot myself and slew them both."

"So England—was—again—barred—to—me. I—took—the—Viking
path—again—"

Athelstan's words trailed off. His hands slid limply from his lap and the whetstone and dirk dropped to the floor. His head fell forward on his broad chest and his eyes closed.

"To much wine," muttered Turlogh. "But let him slumber, I'll keep watch."

Yet even as he spoke, the Gael was aware of a strange loassitude stealing over him. He lay back in the barred chair. His eyes felt heavy and sleep filled his brain despite himself. And as he lay there, a strange nightmare vision came to him. One of the heavy hangings on the wall opposite the door swayed violently and from behind it shook a fearful shape that crept clattering across the room. Turlogh watched it apathetically, aware that he was dreaming, and at the same time wondering at the strangeness of the dream. The thing was grotesquely like a crooked gaillard man in shape, but its face was bestial. It bared yellow fangs as it lurched silently toward him, and from under pent-house brows small necklaced eyes gleamed demoniacally. Yet there was something of the human in its countenance; it was neither ape nor man, but an unnatural creature horribly compounded of both.

Now the foul apparition halted before him, and as the gnarled fingers clasped his throat, Turlogh was suddenly and fearfully aware that this was no dream but a fiendish reality. With a burst of desperate effort he broke the unseen chains that held him and flailed himself from the chair. The grasping fingers nipped his throat, but quick as he was, he could not elude the swift lunge of those hairy arms, and the next instant he was tumbling about the floor in a death-grip with the monster, whose jaws felt like phant steel.

That fearful battle was fought in gloom save for the hissing of half-drawn breath. Turlogh's left forearm was thrust under the apish chin, holding back the grisly fangs from his throat, about which the monster's fingers had locked. Athelstan still slept in his chair, head fallen forward. Turlogh tried to call to him, but those throttling hands had shut off his voice—was it not choking out his life? The room swam in a red haze before his dazed eyes. His right hand, clenched into an iron mallet, battered desperately at the fiendish face beat toward his, the beast-like teeth shattered under his brows and blood spattered, but still the red eyes glared and the taloned fingers sank deeper and deeper until a ringing in Turlogh's ears knelled his soul's departure.

Even as he sank into semi-unconsciousness, his falling hand struck something his unaided fighting-brain recognized as the dirk. Athelstan had dropped on the floor blindly, with a dying gesture. Turlogh struck and felt the fingers loosen suddenly. Feeling the return of life and power, he heaved up and over, with his scowlant bones

him. Through red mists that slowly lightened, Turlogh Dallach saw the ape-man, now encircled, writhing beneath him, and he drove the dirk home until the dumb horror lay still with wide staring eyes.

The Gael staggered to his feet, dizzy and panting, trembling in every limb. He drew in great gulps of air and his giddiness slowly cleared. Blood trickled plentifully from the wounds in his throat. He noted with amazement that the Saxon still slumbered. And suddenly he began to feel again the tides of unnatural weariness and lassitude that had rendered him helpless before. Picking up his ax, he shook off the feeling with difficulty and stepped toward the curtain from behind which the ape-man had come. Like an invisible were a subtle power emanating from these hangings struck him, and with weighted limbs he forced his way across the room. Now he stood before the curtain and felt the power of a terrific evil will beating upon his own, menacing his very soul, threatening to smother him, brain and body. Twice he raised his hand and twice it dropped limply to his side. Now for the third time he made a mighty effort and tore the hangings bodily from the wall. For a flashing instant he caught a glimpse of a bizarre, half-naked figure in a mantle of peacock-feathers and a head-gear of waving plumes. Then as he felt the full hypnotic blast of those blazing eyes, he closed his own eyes and struck blind. He felt his ax sink deep; then he opened his eyes and gazed at the silent figure which lay at his feet, cleft head in a widening crimson pool.

And now Athelstanus suddenly leaped erect, eyes flaring bewilderedly, snored out. "What—?" he stammered, glancing wildly. "Turlogh, what is this man's happened? This's blood! That is a priest there, but what is this dead thing?"

"One of the devils of this foul city," answered Turlogh, wrenching his ax free. "I think Gothorn has failed again. This one stood behind the hangings and bewitched us miswars. He put the spell of sleep on us—"

"Aye, I slept," the Saxon nodded dazedly. "But how came they here—"

"There must be a secret door behind these hangings, though I cannot find it—"

"Hark!" From the room where the queen slept there came a vague scuffling sound, that in its very faintness seemed fraught with grisly portentabilities.

"Brushfield!" Turlogh shouted. A strangled gurgle answered him. He thrust against the door. It was locked. As he leaved up his ax to hew it open, Athelstanus brashed him aside and hurled his full weight against it. The panels crashed and through their ruins Athelstanus plunged into the room. A roar burst from his lips. Over the Saxon's shoulder Turlogh saw a vision of delirium. Brushfield, queen of Bal-Sagoch, writhed helpless in anguish, gripped by the black shadow of

a nightmare. Then as the great black shape turned cold flaming eyes on them Turlogh saw it was a living creature. It stood, man-like, upon two tree-like legs, but its outline and face were not of a man, beast or devil. This, Turlogh felt, was the horror that even Cethan had hesitated to loose upon his foes, the arch fiend that the demoniac priest had brought into life in his hidden caves of hell. What ghastly knowledge had been necessary what hideous blending of human and bestial things with nameless shapes from outer voids of darkness?

Held like a babe in arms Brunhild writhed, eyes flaring with horror, and as the Thing took a misshapen hand from her white throat to defend itself, a scream of heart-shaking fright burst from her pale lips. Athelstane, first in the room, was struck by the Goliath. The black shape loomed over the giant Saxon, towering and overshadowing him, but Athelstane, grasping the lilt with both hands, hopped upward. The great sword sank over half its length into the black body and came out crimson at the monster's curled back. A hellish paroxysm of sound burst forth, and the echoes of that hideous yell thundered through the palace and deafened the hearers. Turlogh was springing in, as high, when the fiend dropped the girl and fled reeling across the room, vanishing in a dark opening that now gaped in the wall. Athelstane, clean bewerk, plunged after it.

Turlogh made to follow, but Brunhild, reeling up, threw her white arms around him in a grip even he could hardly break. "No!" she screamed, eyes ablaze with terror. "do not follow them into that fearful corridor! It must lead to Hell itself! The Saurs will never return! Let you not share his fate!"

"Loose me, woman!" roared Turlogh in a frenzy, striving to disengage himself without hurting her. "My comrade may be fighting for his life!"

"Wait till I summon the guard!" she cried, but Turlogh flung her from him, and as he sprang through the secret doorway, Brunhild moaned on the jade gong until the palace re-echoed. A loud pounding began in the corridor and Zinnia's voice shouted "Oh queen, are you in peril? Shall we burst the door?"

"Hasten!" she screamed, as she rushed to the outer door and flung it open.

Turlogh, leaping recklessly into the corridor, raced along in darkness for a few moments, hearing ahead of him the agonized bellowing of the wounded manster and the deep fierce snorts of the Viking. Then these noises faded away in the distance as he came into a narrow passageway faintly lighted with torches stuck into rocks. Face down on the floor lay a brown man, clad in gay feathers, his skull crushed like an egg-shell.

How long Turlogh O'Brien followed the dizzy windings of the shadowy corridor he never knew. Other smaller passages led off to

each side but he kept to the main corridor. At last he passed under an arched doorway and came out into a strange vasty room.

Somber massive columns upheld a shadowy ceiling so high it seemed like a brooding cloud arched against a midnight sky. Turloch saw that he was in a temple. Behind a black red-stained stone altar loomed a mighty form, stouter and abhorrent. The god Gol-goroth! Surely it must be he. But Turloch spared only a single glance for the colossal figure that brooded there in the shadows. Before him was a strange tableau. Athelstane leaped on his great sword and gazed at the two shapes which sprawled in a red welter at his feet. Whatever foul magic had brought the Black Thing into life, it had taken but a crust of English steel to hurl it back into the limbo whence it came. The monster lay half across its last victim—a gaunt white-bearded man whose eyes were starkly evil, even in death.

"Cothan!" speculated the startled Gael.

"Aye, the priest—I was close behind this troll or whatever it is, all the way along the corridor, but for all its size it fled like a dove. Once one in a feather mantle tried to halt it, and it smashed his skull and passed not an instant. At last we burst into this temple, I close upon the monster's heels with my sword raised for the death-cut. But Thos's blood! When it saw the old one standing by that altar, it gave one fearful howl and tore him to pieces and died itself, all in an instant, before I could reach it and strike."

Turloch gazed at the huge formless thing. Looking directly at it, he could form no estimate of its nature. He got only a chaotic impression of great size and Ishuman evil. Now it lay like a vast shadow blotted out on the marble floor. Surely black wings beating from sunless gulf, had lowered over its beth, and the grisly souls of sunless demons had gone into its being.

And now Beunibald rushed from the dark corridor with Zozar and the guardians. And from outer doors and secret nooks came others steadily—warriors, and priests in feathered mantles, until a great throng stood in the Temple of Darkness.

A fierce cry broke from the queen as she saw what had happened. Her eyes blazed terribly and she was gripped by a strange madness.

"At last!" she screamed, spurning the corpse of her arch-foe with her heel, "at last I am true mistress of Bal-Sagoth! The words of the hidden ways are true now, and old Cothan's beard is delubed in his own blood!"

She flung her arms high in fearful triumph, and ran toward the grim idol, screaming exultant insults like a mad-woman. And at that instant the temple rocked! The colossal image swayed outward, and then pitched suddenly forward as a tall tower falls. Turloch shouted and leaped forward, but even as he did, with a thunder like the bursting of a world, the god Gol-goroth crashed down upon the doorway.

woman, who stood frozen. The mighty image splintered into a thousand great fragments, blotting from the sight of men for ever Branhild, daughter of Rane Thorfin's son, queen of Bal-Sageth. From under the ruins there flowed a wide crimson stream.

Warriors and priests stood frozen, dazed by the crash of that fall, stunned by the weird catastrophe. An icy hand touched Timlegh's spine. Had that vast bulk been flung over by the hand of a dead man? As it had rushed downward it had seemed to the Gael that the inhuman features had for an instant taken on the likeness of the dead Cothan!

Now at all stood speechless, the neophyte Celka saw and seized his opportunity.

"Coh-grath has spoken!" he screamed. "He has crushed the false gods! She was but a wicked mortal! And these strangers, too, are mortal! See—he bleeds!"

The priest's finger stabbed at the dried blood on Timlegh's throat and a wild roar went up from the throng. Daeril and bewilberled by the swiftness and magnitude of the late events, they were like crazed wolves, ready to wipe out doubt and fear in a burst of bloodshed. Celka bounded at Timlegh, hatchet flinging, and a knife in the hand of a satellite lashed onto Zemur's back. Timlegh had not understood the shout, but he realized the air was brimful with danger for Athelstane and himself. He met the leaping Celka with a shake that sheared through the waving plumes and the skull beneath, then half a dozen lances broke on his buckler and a rush of bodies swept him back against a great pillar. Then Athelstane, slow of thought, who had stood gaping for the flinging sword it had taken him to transpire, awoke in a blast of awesome fury. With a deafening roar he swung his heavy sword in a mighty arc. The whirling blade whipped off a head, sheared through a torso and sank deep into a spinal column. The three corpses fell across each other and even in the madness of the strife, men cried out at the marvel of that single stroke.

But like a brown, blind tide of fury the maddened people of Bal-Sageth rolled on their foes. The guardmen of the dead queen, trapped in the press, died to a man without a chance to strike a blow. But the overthrust of the two white warriors was no such easy task. Back to back they clashed and strode, Athelstane's sword was a thunderbolt of death; Timlegh's ax was lightning. Headlong close by a sea of writhing brown forms and flashing steel, they hacked their way slowly toward a doorway. The very mass of the attackers impeded the warriors of Bal-Sageth, for they had no space to guide their strokes, while the weapons of the savages kept a bloody ring clear in front of them.

Reaping a ghastly row of corpses as they went, the comrades slowly cut their way through the snarling press. The Temple of

Shadowz, witness of many a bloody deed, was flooded with gore spilled like a red sacrifice to her broken gods. The heavy weapons of the white fighters wrought fearful havoc among their naked, lighter-clad foes, while their allies guarded their own lives. But their arms, legs and faces were cut and gashed by the frantically flying steel and it seemed the sheer number of their foes would overwhelm them ere they could reach the door.

Then they had reached it, and made desperate play till the brown warriors, no longer able to come upon them from all sides, drew back for a breathing-space, leaving a torn red heap before the threshold. And in that instant the two sprang back into the corridor and seizing the great beaten door, slammed it in the very faces of the warriors who leaped howling to prevent it. Athelstan, bracing his mighty legs, held it against their combined efforts until Turlogh had time to find and slip the bolt.

"Thord!" gasped the Saxon, shaking the blood in a red shower from his face. "This is close play! What now, Turlogh?"

"Down the corridor, quick!" snapped the Gael, "before they come on in from this way and trap us like rats against this door. By Satan, the whole city must be roused! Back to that roofing!"

In truth, as they raced down the shadowed corridor, it seemed to them that all Bal-Sageth had burst into rebellion and civil war. From all sides came the clashing of steel, the shouts of men, and the screams of women, overshadowed by a hideous howling. A head glow became apparent down the corridor and then even as Turlogh, in the lead, rounded a corner and came out into an open courtyard, a vague figure leaped at him and a heavy weapon fell with unexpected force on his shield, almost felling him. But even as he staggered he struck back and the upper-spike on his ax sank under the heat of his attacker, who fell at his feet. In the glare that illuminated all, Turlogh saw his victim differed from the brown warriors he had been fighting. This man was naked, powerfully muscled and of a copperish red rather than brown. The heavy animal-like jaw, the sloping low forehead showed none of the intelligence and refinement of the brown people, but only a brute ferocity. A heavy war-club, rudely carved, lay beside him.

"By Thor!" exclaimed Athelstan, "the city burns!"

Turlogh looked up. They were standing on a sort of raised courtyard from which broad steps led down into the street, and from this vantage-point they had a plain view of the terrible end of Bal-Sageth. Flames leaped madly higher and higher, palely the moon, and in the red glare pigmy figures ran to and fro, falling and dying like puppets dancing to the tune of the Black Gods. Through the roar of the flames and the crashing of falling walls cut screams of death and shrieks of ghastly triumph. The city was swimming with naked, copper-skinned

devils who burned and ravished and butchered in one red carnival of madness.

The red men of the island! By the thousands they had descended on the Isle of the Gods in the night, and whether stealth or treachery led them through the walls, the comrades never knew, but now they roamed through the corpse-strewn streets, glutting their blood-lust in holocaust and massacre wholesale. Not all the gaunt forms that lay in the crimson-tinting streets were brown; the people of the doomed city fought with desperate courage but, outnumbered and caught off guard, their courage was futile. The red men were like blood-lunatic tigers.

"What ho, Turlogh!" shouted Athelstane, beard abravile, eyes ablaze as the madness of the scene filled a like passion in his own heroic soul. "The world ends! Let us into the thick of it and get our steel before we die! Who shall we strike for—the red or the brown?"

"Steady!" snapped the Cael. "Either people would cut our throats. We must back our way through to the gates, and the Devil take them all. We have no friends here. This way—down these stairs. Across the roofs in yonder direction I see the arch of a gate."

The comrades sprang down the stairs, gained the narrow street below and ran swiftly in the way Turlogh indicated. About them washed a red inundation of slaughter. A thick smoke veiled all now, and as the stark chaotic groups merged, writhed and scattered, littering the shattered flags with gory shapes. It was like a nightmare in which depraved figures leaped and crept, looming suddenly in the fire-shot mist, vanishing as suddenly. The flames from each side of the streets shoulderied each other, singeing the hair of the warriors as they ran. Roofs fell in with an awesome thunder and walls crashing into ruin filled the air with flying death. Men struck blindly from the smoke and the seafarers cast them down and never knew whether their skins were brown or red.

Now a new note rose in the cataclysmic horror. Blinded by the smoke, confused by the winding streets, the red men were trapped in the snare of their own making. Fire is ingenuous; it can burn the lighter, as well as the intended victim; and a falling wall is blind. The red men abandoned their prey and ran howling to and fro like beasts, seeking escape, many, finding this futile, turned back as a last unreasoning storm of madness as a blinded tiger turns, and made their last moments of life a crimson burst of slaughter.

Turlogh, with the unerring sense of direction that comes to men who live the life of the wolf, ran toward the point where he knew an outer gate to be; yet in the windings of the streets and the screen of smoke, doubt assailed him. From the flame-shot mark in front of him a fearful scream rang out. A naked girl reeled blindly into view and fell at Turlogh's feet, blood gushing from her mutilated breast. A

howling, red-stained devil, close on her heels, jerked back her head and cut her throat a fraction of a second before Turlogh's ax ripped the head from its shoulders and spun it geysering into the street. And at that second a sudden wind shifted the writhing smoke and the comrades saw the open gateway ahead of them, nowswarm with red warriors. A fierce shout, a blasting rush, a mad instant of volcanic ferocity that littered the gateway with corpses, and they were through and racing down the slopes toward the distant forest and the beach beyond. Before them the sky was reddening for dawn, behind them rose the soul-shaking tumult of the doomed city.

Like hunted things they fled, seeking brief shelter among the many groves from time to time, to avoid groups of savages who ran toward the city. The whole island seemed to be swarming with them, the chiefs must have drawn on all the isles within hundreds of miles for a raid of such magnitude. And at last the comrades reached the strip of forest, and breathed deeply as they came to the beach and found it abandoned save for a number of long skull-decorated war canoes.

Athelstane sat down and gasped for breath. "Thor's blood! What now? What may we do but hide in these woods until those red devils hunt us out?"

"Help me launch this boat," snapped Turlogh. "We'll take our chance on the open sea!"

"Ho!" Athelstane leaped erect, pointing. "Thor's blood, a ship!"

The sun was just up, gleaming like a great golden com on the horizon, and turned to the sun swam a tall, high-peeped craft. The comrades leaped into the nearest canoe, shoved off and rowed like mad, shooting and waving their oars to attract the attention of the crew. Powerful muscles drove the long slim craft along at an incredible clip, and it was not long before the ship stood about and allowed them to come alongside. Dark-faced men, clad in mail, looked over the rail.

"Spaniards," muttered Athelstane. "If they recognise me, I had better stay on the island!"

But he clambered up the chain without hesitation, and the two wanderers fronted the somber-faced man whose armor was that of a knight of Asturias. He spoke to them in Spanish and Turlogh answered him, for the Gael, like many of his race, was a natural linguist and had wandered far and speaks many tongues. In a few words the Dalcassian told their story and explained the great pillar of smoke which now rolled upward in the morning air from the island.

"Tell him there is a king's ransom for the taking," put in Athelstane. "Tell him of the silver gates, Turlogh."

But when the Gael spoke of the vast loot in the doomed city, the commander shook his head.

"Good sir, we have no time to secure it, nor men to waste in the island."

taking. These red fiends you describe would hardly give up anything—though useless to them—without a fierce battle and neither my time nor my force is mine. I am Don Boderigo del Cortez of Castile and this ship, the *Gray Fawn*, is one of a fleet that sailed to harry the Moorish Corsairs. Some days ago we were separated from the rest of the fleet in a sea skirmish and the tempest blew us far off our course. We are even now heading back to rejoin the fleet if we can find it, if not, to harry the infidel as well as we may. We serve God and the king and we cannot halt for mere thons as you suggest. But you are welcome aboard this ship and we have need of such fighting men as you appear to be. You will not regret it, should you wish to join us and strike a blow for Christendom against the Moslems."

In the narrow-bridged nose and deep dark eyes, as in the lean ascetic face, Turlogh read the fanatic, the stainless cavalier, the knight errant. He spoke to Athelstane: "This man is mad, but there are good blows to be struck and strange lands to see, anyway, we have no other choice."

"One place is as good as another to masterless men and wood-rovers," quoth the huge Saxon. "Tell him we will follow him to Hell and singe the tail of the Devil if there be any chance of lost."

4. *Expire*

Turlogh and Athelstane leaned on the rail, gazing back at the swiftly receding Island of the Gods, from which rose a pillar of smoke, laden with the ghosts of a thousand centuries and the shadows and mysteries of forgotten empire, and Athelstane cursed as only a Saxon can.

"A king's ransom—and after all that blood-letting—no lost!"

Turlogh shook his head. "We have seen an ancient kingdom fall—we have seen the last remnant of the world's oldest empire sink into flames and the abyss of oblivion, and kerburism rear its brute head above the ruins. So pass the glory and the splendor and the imperial purple—in red flames and yellow smoke."

"But not one bit of plunder—" persisted the Viking.

Again Turlogh shook his head. "I brought away with me the rarest gem upon the island—something for which men and women have died and the guitars run with blood."

He drew from his girdle a small object—a curiously carved symbol of pole.

"The emblem of kingship?" exclaimed Athelstane.

"Aye—as Brusilki struggled with me to keep me from following you into the corridor, this thing caught in my mail and was torn from the golden chain that held it."

"He who bears it is king of Bal-Sagoth," ruminated the mighty Saseen. "As I predicted, Turloch, you are a king!"

Turloch laughed with bitter mirth and pointed to the great billowing column of smoke which floated in the sky away on the sea-side.

"Aye—a kingdom of the dead—an empire of ghosts and smoke. I am Ard-Righ of a phantom city—I am King Turloch of Bal-Sagoth and my kingdom is fading in the morning sky. And therein it is like all other empires in the world—dreams and ghosts and smoke."

The Chain of Afargaman

by Clark Ashton Smith

It is the peculiar genius of Clark Ashton Smith to tie up the world of fantasy with the world of modern man. Himself chained to the planet by the bonds of flesh, his poetic mind constantly drifts on the far-outward wonders of the stars, and on the infinite corridors of time. Your editor considers his prose to be the most bizarre and fantastic imagery of any writer now alive, with the possible exception of Lord Dunsany, and not excepting James Branch Cabell in the invention of Smith's work, the tie between the world of man and the benevolent infinity of the universe is brought out in breath-taking vision.

IT IS indeed strange that John Milwarp and his writings should have fallen so speedily into semi-oblivion. His books, treating of Oriental life in a somewhat flowery, romantic style, were popular a few months ago. But now, in spite of their range and penetration, their pervasive verbal beauty, they are seldom mentioned, and they seem to have vanished unaccountably from the shelves of bookstores and libraries.

Even the mystery of Milwarp's death, baffling to both law and science, has evoked but a passing interest, an excitement quickly lulled and forgotten.

I was well acquainted with Milwarp over a term of years. But my recollection of the man is becoming strangely blurred, like an image in a misted mirror. His dark, half-alien personality, his preoccupation with the occult, his immense knowledge of Eastern life and lore, are things I remember with such effort and vagueness as although the recovery of a dream. Sometimes I almost doubt that he ever existed. It is as if the man, and all that pertains to him, were being erased from human record by some mysterious acceleration of the common process of oblivion.

In his will, he appointed me his executor. I have vainly tried to interest publishers in the novel he left among his papers: a novel surely not inferior to anything he ever wrote. They say that his vogue has passed. Now I am publishing the contents of the diary kept by Milwarp for a period preceding his demise.

Perhaps, for the open-minded, this diary will explain the enigma of his death. It would seem that the circumstances at that death are

virtually forgotten, and I repeat them here as part of my endeavor to revive and perpetuate Milwarp's memory.

Milwarp had returned to his house in San Francisco after a long sojourn in Indo-China. We who knew him gathered that he had gone into places seldom visited by Occidentals. At the time of his demise he had just finished correcting the typescript of a novel which dealt with the more romantic and mysterious aspects of Burma.

On the morning of April 2, 1933, his housekeeper, a middle-aged woman, was startled by a glare of brilliant light which issued from the half-open door of Milwarp's study. It was as if the whole room were in flames. Horrified, the woman hastened to investigate. Entering the study, she saw her master sitting in an armchair at the table, wearing the rich, somber robes of Chinese brocade which he affected as a dressing gown. He sat stiffly erect, a pen clutched unmoving in his fingers on the open pages of a manuscript volume. About him, in a sort of nimbus, glowed and flickered the strange light, and her only thought was that his garments were on fire.

She ran toward him, crying out a warning. At that moment the weird nimbus brightened intolerably, and the wan early dayshone, the electric bolts that still burned to attest the night's labor, were all blotted out. It seemed to the housekeeper that something had gone wrong with the room itself, for the walls and table vanished, and a great, luminous gulf opened before her, and on the verge of the gulf, in a seat that was not his cushioned armchair but a huge and rough-hewn seat of stone, she beheld her master stark and rigid. His heavy brocaded robes were gone, and about him, from head to foot, were blinding coils of pure white fire, in the form of linked chains. She could not endure the brilliance of the chains and, covering back, she shielded her eyes with her hands. When she dared to look again, the weird glowing had faded, the room was as usual, and Milwarp's motionless figure was seated at the table in the posture of writing.

Shaken and terrified as she was, the woman found courage to approach her master. A hideous smell of burnt flesh arose from beneath his garments, which were wholly intact and without visible trace of fire. He was dead, his fingers clenched on the pen and his features frozen in a stare of tetanic agony. His neck and wrists were completely encircled by scalding burns that had charred them deeply. The coroner, in his examination, found that these burns, preserving an outline as of heavy links, were extended in long unbent spirals around the arms and legs and torso. The burning was apparently the cause of Milwarp's death. It was as if iron chains, heated to incandescence, had been wrapped about him.

Small credit was given to the housekeeper's story of what she had seen. No one, however, could suggest an acceptable explanation of

the hercane mystery. There was, at the time, much amateur discussion, but, as I have hinted, people soon turned to other matters. The efforts made to solve the riddle were somewhat perfunctory. Chemists tried to determine the nature of a queer drug, in the form of a gray powder with pearly granules, to which use Milwarp had become addicted. But their tests merely revealed the presence of an alkaloid whose source and attributes were obscure to Western science.

Day by day, the whole incredible business slipped from public attention, and those who had known Milwarp began to display the forgetfulness that was no less miraculously than his weird doom. The housekeeper, who had held steadily in the beginning to her story, came at length to share the common delusion. Her account, with repetition, became vague and contradictory; detail by detail, she seemed to forget the abnormal circumstances that she had witnessed with overwhelming horror.

The manuscript volume, in which Milwarp had apparently been writing at the time of death, was given into my charge with his other papers. It proved to be a diary, its last entry breaking off abruptly. Since reading the diary, I have hastened to transcribe it in my own hand, because, for some mysterious reason, the ink of the original is already fading and has become almost illegible in places.

The reader will note certain lacunae, due to passages written in an alphabet which neither I nor any scholar of my acquaintance can transliterate. These passages seem to form an integral part of the narrative, and they occur mainly toward the end, as if the writer had turned more and more to a language remembered from his ancient avatars. To the same mental recesses one must attribute the singular dating, in which Milwarp, still employing English script, appears to pass from our contemporary notation to that of some premodem world.

I give hereunder the entire diary, which begins with an undated footnote.

This book, unless I have been misinformed concerning the qualities of the drug powders, will be the record of my former life in a lost cycle. I have had the drug in my possession for seven months, but it has prevented me from using it. Now, by certain tokens, I perceive that the longing for knowledge will soon overcome the fear.

Ever since my earliest childhood I have been troubled by intimations, dim, unplaceable, that seemed to argue a forgotten existence. These intuitions pointed of the nature of feelings rather than ideas or images: they were like the writhings of dead serpents. In the background of my mind there has lurked a sentiment of lossless, melancholy desire for some vanished beauty long perished out of time. And, consequently, I have been haunted by an equally formless dread, an apprehension as of some bygone but still imminent doom.

Such feelings have persisted, uniminished, throughout my youth and maturity, but nowhere have I found any clue to their causation. My travels in the mystic Orient, my delvings into occultism, have merely convinced me that these shadowy intuitions pertain to some incarnation buried under the wreck of remotest cycles.

Many times in my wanderings through Buddhistic lands, I had heard of the drug senna, which is believed to restore, even for the uninitiate, the memory of other lives. And at last, after many vain efforts, I managed to procure a supply of the drug. The manner in which I obtained it is a tale sufficiently remarkable in itself, but of no special relevance here. So far—perhaps because of that apprehension which I have hinted—I have not dared to use the drug.

March 9th, 1921. This morning I took senna for the first time, dissolving the proper amount in pure distilled water as I had been instructed to do. Afterward I leaned back easily in my chair, breathing with a slow, regular rhythm. I had no preconceived idea of the sensations that would mark the drug's initial effect, since these were said to vary prodigiously with the temperament of the user, but I composed myself to await them with tranquillity, after formulating clearly in my mind the purpose of the experiment.

For a while there was no change in my awareness. I noticed a slight quickening of the pulse, and modulated my breathing in conformity with this. Then, by slow degrees, I experienced a sharpening of visual perception. The Chinese rugs on the floor, the backs of the bound volumes in my bookcases, the very wood of chairs, table and shelves, began to exhibit new and unimagined colors. At the same time there were curious alterations of outline, every object seeming to extend itself in a hitherto unsuspected fashion. Following this, my surroundings became semi-transparent, like molded shapes of mist. I found that I could see through the mottled cover over the illustrations in a volume of John Martin's edition of *Paradise Lost*, which lay before me on the table.

All this, I knew, was a mere extension of ordinary physical vision. It was only a prelude to those apperceptions of occult realms which I sought through senna. Firing my mind once more on the goal of the experiment, I became aware that the misty walls had vanished like a drawn帘. About me, like reflections in rippled water, dimensions swirled and shifted, casting one another from instant to instant. I seemed to hear a vague but ever-present sound, more musical than the murmur of air, water or fire, which was a property of the unknown element that possessed me.

With a sense of troubless familiarity, I beheld the blurred unstable pictures which flowed past me upon this never-settling medium. Orient temples flashing with sun-struck bronze and gold, the sharp,

crowded gables and spires of medieval cities, tropic and northern forests; the costumes and physiognomies of the Levant, of Persia, of old Rome and Carthage, were by like blown, flying images. Each succeeding tableau belonged to a more ancient period than the one before it—and I knew that each was a scene from some former existence of my own.

Still tethered, as it were, to my present self, I reviewed these visible memories, which took on tri-dimensional depth and clarity. I saw myself as warrior and troubadour, as noble and merchant and mendicant, I trembled with dead fears, I thrilled with lost hopes and raptures, and was drawn by ties that death and Lethe had broken. Yet never did I fully identify myself with those other avatars, for I knew well that the memory I sought pertained to some incarnation of older epochs.

Still the ghastly magnificence steamed on, and I turned ghily with vertigo ineffable before the vastness and diuturnity of the cycles of being. It seemed that I, the watcher, was lost in a gray land where the homeless ghosts of all dead ages went fleeing from oblivion to oblivion.

The walls of Nineveh, the columns and towers of sunken cities, rose before me and were swept away. I saw the luxuriant plains that are now the Gobi Desert. The sea-lost capitals of Atlantis were drawn to the light in unspeakable glory. I gazed on high and cloudy scenes from the first continents of Earth. Thusly I relived the beginnings of terrestrial man—and knew that the secret I would learn was deeper even than thine.

My vision faded into black voidness—and yet, in that void, through fathomless suns, it seemed that I existed still like a blind atom in the space between the worlds. About me was the darkness and repose of that night which antedated the Earth's creation. Time flowed backward with the silence of dreamless sleep

The illumination, when it came, was instant and complete. I stood in the full, fervid blaze of day amid royally towering blossoms in a deep garden, beyond whose lofty, vine-clad walls I heard the confused murmurings of the great city called Kalied. Above me, at their vernal zenith, were the four small suns that illumined the planet Hestan. Jewel-colored insects flitted about me, lighting without fear on the rich habitaments of gold and black, encrusted with astraneous pyxibis, in which I was attired. Beside me was a dial-shaped altar of zoned agate, carved with the same symbols, which were those of the dreadfulest omnipotent time-god, Aforgonam, whom I served as a priest.

I had not even the slightest memory of myself as John Miharp, and the long pageant of my terrestrial lives was as something that had never been—or was yet to be. Sorrow and desolation choked my heart as ashes fill some urn consecrated to the dead; and all the hues and perfumes of the garden about me were redolent only of the bitterness

of death. Gazing darkly upon the altar, I uttered blasphemy against Alorgonion who, in his miserable course, had taken away my beloved and had sent no solace for my grief. Separately I cursed the signs upon the altar: the stars, the worlds, the suns, the moons, that acted and fulfilled the processes of time. Belithra, my betrothed, had died at the end of the previous autumn; and so, with double audiolitions, I cursed the stars and planets presiding over that season.

I became aware that a shadow had fallen beside my own on the altar, and knew that the dark sage and sinner Atros had obeyed my summons. Fearfully but not without hope I turned toward him, noting first of all that he bore under his arm a heavy, wizened-looking volume with covers of black steel and hinged at admiring. Only when I had made use of this did I lift my eyes to his face, which was little less wanter and forbidding than the time he carried.

"Greeting, O Calypso," he said harshly. "I have come against my own will and judgment. The love that you request is in this volume, and since you saved me in former years from the impunatorial wrath of the time-god's priests, I cannot refuse to share it with you. But understand well that even I, who have galled upon names that are dreadful to utter, and have evoked forbidden presences, shall never dare to assist you in this conjunction. Gladly would I help you to hold communion with the shadow of Belithra, or to animate her still unswathed body and draw it forth from the tomb. But that which you purpose is another matter. You alone must perform the ordained rites, must speak the necessary words; for the consequences of this thing will be dire than you deem."

"I care not for the consequences," I replied cogently, "if it be possible to bring back the lost hours which I shared with Belithra. Think you that I could content myself with her shadow, wandering thither back from the Borderland? Or that I could take pleasure in the fair day that the breath of necromancy has troubled and has made to arise and walk without mind or soul? Nay, the Belithra I would summon is the one whom the shadow of death has never yet fallen!"

It seemed that Atros, the master of diridiments, the vessel of unbreakable power, shrank and blushed before my vehement declaration.

"Bethink you," he said with mandatory sternness, "that this thing will constitute a breach of the sacred logic of time and a blasphemy against Alorgonion god of the minutes and the cycles. Moreover, there is little to be gained: for not in its entirety may you bring back the season of your love, but only one single hour, torn with infinite violence from its rightful period in time . . . Belithra, I adjure you, and content yourself with a lesser sorcery."

"Give me the book," I demanded. "My service to Alorgonion is forfeit. With due reverence and devotion I have worshipped the true-

god, and have done in his honor the rites ordained from eternity; and for all this the god has betrayed me."

Then, in that high-climbing, luxuriant garden beneath the four suns, Atmox opened the adamantine clasp of the steel-bound volume, and, turning to a certain page, he laid the book reluctantly in my hands. The page, like its fellows, was of some unely parchment streaked with musty discolorations and blackening at the margin with sheer antiquity, but upon it shone unquenchably the diadem character, a primal archimage had written with an ink bright as the new-shed achor of demons. Above this page I bent in my matress, counting it over and over till I was dazzled by the fiery roses, and, shutting my eyes, I saw them burn on a red darkness, still legible, and writhing like hellish worms.

"Hollowly, like the sound of a far bell, I heard the voice of Atmox: "You have learned, O Cabeza, the unutterable name of that One whose assistance can alone rescue the fled houses. And you have learned the incantation that will rouse that hidden power, and the sacrifice needed for its propitiation. Knowing these things, is your heart still strong and your purpose firm?"

The name I had read in the weird volume was that of the chief cosmic power antagonistic to Abegomion: the incarnation and the required offering were those of a foul demigodly. Nevertheless, I did not hesitate, but gave resolute affirmative answer to the sombre query of Atmox.

Possessing that I was inflexible, he bowed his head, trying no more to dissuade me. Then, as the flame-irred volume had bade me do, I defiled the altar of Abegomion, blotting certain of its prime symbols with dust and spittle. While Atmox looked on in silence, I writhed my right arm to its deepest vein on the sharp-tipped gemos of the diadem and, letting the blood drip from rose to rose, from orb to orb of the gravestone, I made unlawful sacrifice, and intoned aloud, in the name of the Lurking Ones, Kewanth, an abominable ritual composed by a backward repetition and pausing of litany sacred to the time-god.

Even as I chanted the incantation, it seemed that webs of shadow were woven faintly about the suns, and the ground shook a little, as if colossal demons trod the world's rim, striding stupendously from abysses beyond. The garden walls and trees wavered like a wind-blown reflection in a pool, and I grew faint with the loss of that life-blood I had poured out in diabolical offering. Then, in my flesh and in my bones, I felt the unutterable rocking of a vibration like the long drawn shock of cities river by earthquake, and coverts crumbling before some chaotic sea, and my flesh was trim and harrowed, and my brain shuddered with the tourless disease sweeping through me from deep to deep.

I faltered, and confusion gauzed at my smoot being. Dimly I heard the prompting of Atmor, and dimmer still was the sound of my own voice that made answer to Xezanoth, naming the impious neutrality which was to be effected only through its power. Madly I implored from Xezanoth, in despite of time and its ordered seasons, one hour of that bygone autumn which I had shared with Belthoris; and implored this, I named no special hour: for all, in memory, had seemed of an equal joy and gladness.

As the words ceased upon my lips, I thought that darkness fluttered in the air like a great wing, and the four suns went out, and my heart was stilled as if in death. Then the light returned, falling obliquely from suns shallow with full-tided autumn; and nowhere beside me was there any shadow of Atmor; and the altar of zoned agate was bloodless and undefiled. I, the lover of Belthoris, waiting not of the doom and sorrow to come, stood happily with my beloved before the altar, and saw her young hands crown its ancient dial with the flowers we had plucked from the garden.

Dreadful beyond all fathoming are the mysteries of time. Even I, the priest and initiate, though wiz'd in the secret doctrines of Aforgaman, know little enough of that elusive, ineluctable process whereby the present becomes the past and the future resolves itself into the present. All men have pondered the riddles of duration and transience, have wondered, vainly, to what bound the lost days and the sped cycles are conjugated. Some have dreamt that the past abides unchanged, becoming eternity as it slips from our mortal ken; and others have deemed that time is a stairway whose steps tumble one by one behind the chamber, falling into a gulf of nothing.

However this may be, I knew that she who stood beside me was the Belthoris on whom no shadow of mortality had yet descended. The hour was one new-born in a golden season, and the minutes to come were pregnant with all wonder and surprise belonging to the untried future.

Taller was my beloved than the frail, unbowed biles of the garden. In her eyes was the sparkle of moonless evenings down with small golden stars. Her lips were strangely curved, but only bitterness and joy had gone to their shaping. She and I had been betrothed from our childhood, and the time of the marriage-feast was now approaching. Our intercourse was wholly free, according to the custom of that world. Often she came to walk with me in my garden and to decorate the altar of that god whose revolving months and suns would soon bring the season of our felicity.

The moths that flew about us, winged with aerial cloth of gold were no lighter than our hearts. Making blithe holiday, we lured our frolic mood to a high flame of rapture. We were akin to the half-hued, climbing flowers, the swift-darting insects, and our spirits blended

and stored with the perfumes that were drawn skyward in the warm air. Highward by us was the fond murmuring of the mighty city of Kaled lying beyond my garden walls; for us the many-peopled planet known as Hestan no longer existed, and we dwelt alone in a universe of light, in a blossomed heaven. Exalted by love in the high harasoy of those moments, we seemed to touch eternity, and even I, the priest of Morgonos, forgot the blossom-fretting days, the system-divorcing cycles.

In the sublime folly of passion, I swore then that death or disease could never mar the perfect communion of our hearts. After we had wreathed the altar, I sought the rarest, the most delectable flowers; fruit-curving cups of wine-washed pearl, of mossy purple and white with scrolled purple lips; and these I twined, between kisses and laughter, in the black mass of Belthoris' hair, saying that another slumber than that of time should receive its due offering.

Tenderly, with a lover's delay, I layed over the writhing, and, ere I had finished, there fluttered to the ground beside us a great, crimson-spotted moth where wing had somehow been broken in its airy voyaging through the garden. And Belthoris, ever tender of heart and pitiful, turned from me and took up the moth in her hands, and some of the bright blossoms dropped from her hair unheeded. Tears welled from her deep blue eyes, and seeing that the moth was surely hurt and would never fly again, she refused to be comforted, and no longer would she respond to my passionate wooing. I, who grieved less for the moth than she, was somewhat vexed, and between her sobs and my vexation, there grew between us some tiny, tempestuous rift . . .

Then, ere love had mended the misunderstanding; then, while we stood before the dead altar of time with sun-dried hands, with eyes averted from each other, it seemed that a shroud of darkness descended upon the garden. I heard the crash and crumbling of shattered worlds, and a bleak flowing of nameless things that went past me through the darkness. The dead leaves of winter were blown about me, and there was a falling of tears or rain. . . . Then the wind subsided, came back, high stationed in cruel splendor, and with them came the knowledge of all that had been, of Belthoris' death and my sorrow, and the madness that had led to forbidden sorcery. Vain now, like all other hours, was the remonstrant hour, and doubly irredeemable was my loss. My blood dripped heavily on the dishallowed altar, my faintness grew deathly, and I saw through misty mist the face of Atmox beside me, and the face was like that of some communitive demon. . . .

March 19th. I, John McWarp, write this date and my name with an odd distinctness. My visionary experience under the drug seances ended

with that rill of my blood on the symbolized dial, that glimpse of the terror-distorted face of Atma. All this was in another world, in a life removed from the present by births and deaths without number, and yet, it seems, not wholly have I lost them from the twice-ancient past. Memories, broken but strangely vivid and living, press upon me from the existence of which my vision was a fragment; and portions of the loss of Ustana, and scraps of its history, and words from its lost language, arise unbidden in my mind.

Above all, my heart is still shadowed by the sorrow of Calapa. His desperate accompany, which would seem to others no more than a dream within a dream, is stamped as with fire on the black page of recollection. I know the awfulness of the god he had blasphemed; and the foulness of the demorality he had done, and the sense of guilt and despair under which he swooned. It is this that I have driven all my life to remember, this which I have been doomed to re-experience. And I fear with a great fear the further knowledge which a second experiment with the drug will reveal to me.

The next entry of Milwarp's diary begins with a strange dating in English script: "The second day of the moon Occult, in the thousand-and-ninth year of the Red Era." This dating, perhaps, is repeated in the language of Ustana; far, directly beneath it, a line of unknown cipher is set apart. Several lines of the subsequent text are in the alien tongue, and then, as if by an unconscious reversion, Milwarp continues the diary in English. There is no reference to another experiment with sources. But apparently such had been made, with a continued revival of his lost memories.

... What genius of the nadir gird had tempted me to this thing and had caused me to overlook the consequences? Verily, when I called up for myself and Beltheris an hour of former autumn, with all that was attendant upon the hour, that bygone interval was likewise evoked and repeated for the whole world Hestan, and the four suns of Hestan. From the full midst of spring, all men had stepped backward into autumn, keeping only the memory of things prior to the hour thus resurrected, and knowing not the events future to the hour. But, returning to the present, they recalled with amazement the unnatural necromancy, and fear and bewilderment were upon them; and none could interpret the meaning.

For a brief period, the dead had lived again, the fallen leaves had returned to the bough; the heavenly bodies had stood at a long-abandoned station, the flower had gone back into the seed, the plant into the root. Thru, with eternal disorder set among all its cycles, time had resumed its delayed course.

No movement of any cosmic body, no year or instant of the future,

would be precisely as it should have been. The error and discrepancy I had wrought would bear fruit in ways unmeasurable. The vassals would find themselves at fault, the worlds and atoms would go always a little astray from their appointed hours.

It was of these matters that Abnos spoke, warning me, after he had stanchéd my bleeding wound. For he too, in that returning hour, had gone back and had lived again through a past happening. For him the hour was one in which he had descended into the nether vaults of his house. There, standing in a many-pestered circle, with buring of unholy incense and uttering of secret formulae, he had called upon a malign spirit from the far-off of Hesuan and had questioned it concerning the future. But the spirit, black and voluminous as the fuses of pitch, refused to answer him directly and pressed furiously with its clawed members against the confines of the circle. It said only, "Thou hast summoned me at thy peril. Potent are the spells thou hast used, and strong is the circle to withhold me, and I am restrained by time and space from the wreaking of my anger upon thee. But loopy thou shalt assasinate me again, albeit in the wane hour of the same autumn, and in that summoning the laws of time shall be broken, and a rift shall be made in space, and through the rift, though with some delay and draggation, I will yet win to thee."

Saying no more, it prudled restlessly about the circle, and its eyes burned down upon Abnos, like cubers in a high-litened sooty brazier, and ever and anon its fanged mouth was flattened on the spell-defended air. And in the end he could dismiss it only after a double repetition of the form of exorcism.

As he told me the tale in the garden, Abnos trembled, and his eyes watched the agrest shadows wrought by the high sun, and he seemed to listen for the noise of some evil thing that burrowed toward him beneath the earth.

Fourth day of the moon. Overall stricken with terrors beyond those of Atnos, I kept apart in my innress amid the city of Kafrod. I was still weak with the loss of blood I had yielded to Xezantil; my senses were full of strange shadows, my servitors, coming and going after me, were as phantoms, and actually I heeded the pale fear in their eyes or heard the dreadful things they whispered. . . . Madness and chaos, they told me, were abroad in Kafrod; the druntny of Abognosus was augered. All men thought that some fatal doom impended because of that unusual confusion which had been wrought among the hours of time.

This afternoon they brought me the story of Abnos's death. In bated tones they told me how his neophytes had heard a roaring as of a boosed tempest in the chamber where he sat alone with his wizard volumes and parchments. Above the roaring, for a little, however

screams had sounded, together with a clashing as of hunkled censers and brasiers, a crashing as of overthrown tables and tomes. Blood filled him under the shut door of the chamber and, filling it took from instant to instant the form of dire oaths that spelled an unspeakable name. After the noises had ceased, the neophytes waited a long while ere they dared to open the door. Entering at last, they saw the floor and the walls heavily besprinkled with blood, and rags of the sorcerer's crimson mangled everywhere with the sheets of his torn volumes of magic, and the shreds and manglings of his flesh strewn amid broken furniture, and his brains dashed in a horrible paste on the high ceiling.

Having this tale, I knew that the earthly demon fixated by Atman had found him somehow and had wreaked its wrath upon him. In ways unmeasurable, it had reached him through the chain made in ordered time and space by one man repeated through incantancy. And because of that lawless drama, the magician's power and love had utterly failed to defend him from the demon. . . .

Fifth day of the moon Oesalat. Abnos, I am sure, had not betrayed me. In so doing, he must have betrayed his own impotent share in my crimes. . . . Howbeit, this evening the priests came to my house ere the setting of the westernmost sun; silent, grim, with eyes averted as if from a fortress incomparable. Me, their fellow, they enjoined with both gestures to accompany them. . . .

Thus they took me from my house and along the thoroughfares of Kalood toward the lowering suns. The streets were empty of all other passers, and it seemed that no man desired to meet or behold the blasphemist. . . .

Down the avenue of gromon-shaped pillars, I was led to the portals of Abngomen's face; these awfully gaping portals arched in the likeness of some devouring chimaera's mouth. . . .

Sixth day of the moon Oesalat. They had thrust me into an cubitello beneath the temple, dark, noiseless and soundless except for the unceasing, measured drip of water beside me. There I lay and knew not when the night passed and the morning came. Light was admitted only when my captors opened the iron door, coming to lead me before the tribunal. . . .

. . . Thus the priests condemned me, speaking with one voice in whose dreadful volume the tones of all were indistinguishably blurred. Then the aged high-priest Helpnor called aloud upon Abngomen, offering himself as a mouthpiece to the god, and asking the god to pronounce through him the doom that was adequate for such enormities as those of which I had been judged guilty by my fellows.

Instantly, it seemed, the god descended into Helsenor; and the figure of the high-priest appeared to dilate prodigiously beneath his maulding; and the accents that issued from his mouth were like thunders of the upper heaven:

"O Calupsa, thou hast set disorder amid all future hours and roas through this evil necromancy. Thereby, moreover, thou hast wrought thine own doom: fettered art thou for ever to the hour thus unlawfully repeated, apart from its due place in time. According to heretic rule, thou shalt meet the death of the fiery chains, but deem not that this death is more than the symbol of thy true punishment. Thou shalt pass hereafter through other lives in Hesian, and shalt clasp midway in the cycles of the world subsequent to Hesian in time and space. But though all these incarnations the chain thou hast invoked will attend thee, widening ever like a rift. And always, in all thy lives, the rift will bar thee from reunion with the soul of Belthorn, and always, though merely by an hour, thou shalt miss the love that should otherwise have been oftentimes regained."

"At last, when the chain has widened overmuch, thy soul shall fare no farther in the onward cycles of incarnation. At that time it shall be given thee to remember clearly those accursed sin, and remembering, thou shalt perish out of time. Upon the body of that latter life shall be found the charred imprint of the chains, as the final token of thy bondage. But they that know thee will soon forget, and thou shalt belong wholly to the cycles limited for thee by thy sin."

March 29th. I write this date with infinite desperation, trying to convince myself that there is a John Milward who exists on Earth, in the Twentieth Century. For two days running, I have not taken the drug apothecary, and yet I have returned twice to that cauldron of Atropos-mon's temple, in which the priest Calupsa awaits his doom. Twice I have been immersed in its stagnant darkness, hearing the slow drip of water beside me, like a clepsydra that tells the black ages of the damned.

Even as I write this at my library table, it seems that an ancient midnight phaze at the lamp. The bookcases turn to walls of owing, sighted stone. There is no longer a table . . . nor one who writes . . . and I breathe the noisome darkness of a dungeon lying infathomed by my sun, in a lost world.

Eighteenth day of the moon Occult. Today, for the last time, they took me from my prison. Helsenor, together with three others, came and led me to the abutment of the god. Far beneath the outer temple we went, through spurious crypts unknown to the common worshippers. There was no word spoken, no glance exchanged between the others

and me; and it seemed that they already regarded me as one cast out from time and charmed by oblivion.

We came ultimately to that sheer-falling gulf in which the spirit of Adorgomen is said to dwell. Lights, feeble and far-scattered, shone around it like stars on the rim of cosmic vastness, shedding no ray into the depths. There, in a seat of hewn stone overhanging the frightful verge, I was placed by the executioners; and a ponderous chain of black unruled metal, stapled to the solid rock, was wound about and about me, encircling my naked body and separate limbs, from head to foot.

To this doom, others had been condemned for heresy or impiety . . . though never for a sin such as mine. After the chaining of the victim, he was left for a stated interim, to ponder his crime—and haply to confront the dark divinity of Adorgomen. At length, from the abyss into which his position forced him to peer, a light would dawn, and a bolt of strange fire would leap upward, striking the many-circled chain about him and heating it irresistibly to the whiteness of condensed fire. The source and nature of the flame were mysterious, and many ascribed it to the god himself rather than to mortal agency. . . .

Even thus they have left me, and have gone away. Long since the burden of the many links, cutting deeper and deeper into my flesh, has become an agony. I am dizzy from gazing downward into the abyss—and yet I cannot fall. Beneath, immensurably beneath, at recurrent intervals, I hear a hollow and solemn sound. Perhaps it is the sigh of sunken waters . . . of cavern-straying winds . . . or the respiration of One that abides in the darkness, meeting with his breath the slow minutes, the hours, the days, the ages. . . . My terror has become heavier than the chain, my vertigo is born of a twofold gulf. . . .

Days have passed by and all the worlds have ebbed into nothingness, like wreckage borne on a chain-falling stone, taking with them the lost face of Belthas. I am poised above the gaping mire of the shadow. . . . Somehow, in another world, an exile phantom has written these words . . . a phantom who must fade utterly from time and place, even as I, the doomed priest Calaspa. I cannot remember the name of the phantom.

Beneath me, in the black depths, there is an awful brightening. . . .

In the Valley of the Sorceress

by Sam Rehmer

The history of ancient Egypt is by no means complete. Picked together by painstaking research, the main outlines have been mapped out of the civilization which may have been the first in earth and man at any rate—the direct ancestor of that civilization we call "Western." There many chapters of human experience still wait for unearthing beneath the featureless sand of the Sahara? The gratification into those "dark regions" of the past must be replete with thrill and wonder. And it is not surprising that out of such buried experience, there will such legends as the one here follows—



—ONDOOR wrote to me three times before the end (said Neville, Assistant Inspector of Antiquities, staring vaguely from his open window at a sandal chipping before the Kasr-an-Nil Barracks). He dated his letters from the camp at Deir-el-Bahri. Judging from these, success appeared to be almost within his grasp. He shared my theories, of course, respecting Queen Hatchepsut, and was devoting the whole of his energies to the task of clearing up the great mystery of Ancient Egypt which centers around that queen.

For him, as for me, there was a strange fascination about those defaced walls and roughly obliterated inscriptions. That the queen under whom Egyptian art came to the spurge of perfection should thus have been treated by her successor; that no perfect figure of the wise, famous, and beautiful Hatchepsut should have been spared to posterity; that her very cartouche should have been ruthlessly removed from every inscription upon which it appeared, presented to Conder's mind a problem only second in interest to the immortal riddle of Giza.

You know my own views upon the matter? My monograph, "Hatchepsut, the Sorceress," embodies my opinion. In short, upon certain evidences, some adduced by Theodore Davis, some by poor Conder, and some resulting from my own inquiries, I have come to the conclusion that the source—real or imaginary—of this queen's power was an intimate acquaintance with what nowadays we term, vaguely, magic. Pursuing her studies beyond the limit which is lawful, she met with a certain end, not uncommon, if the old writings are to be be-

bevel, in the case of those who penetrate too far into the realms of the Borderland.

For this reason—the practice of black magic—her statues were disfigured, and her name erased from the monuments. Now, I do not propose to enter into any discussion respecting the reality of such practices; in my monograph I have merrily endeavored to show that, according to contemporary belief, the queen was a sorceress. Conder was seeking to prove the same thing, and when I took up the inquiry, it was in the hope of completing his interrupted work.

He wrote to me early in the winter of 1893, from his camp by the Rock Temple. Dava's tomb, at Biblia el Malik, with its long, narrow passage, apparently had little interest for him; he was at work on the high ground behind the temple, at a point one hundred yards or so due west of the upper platform. He had an idea that he should find there the amanuens of Hatasu—and another, the letter, a certain Sen Mft, who appears in the inscriptions of the reign as an architect high in the queen's favor. The archaeological points of the letter do not concern us in the least, but there was one odd little paragraph which I had cause to remember afterwards.

"A girl belonging to some Arab tribe," wrote Conder, "came racing to the camp two nights ago to claim my protection. What crime she had committed, and what punishment she bore, were far from clear; but she clung to me, trembling like a leaf, and positively refused to depart. It was a difficult situation, for a camp of fifty native excavators, and one highly respectable European enthusiast, affords no suitable quarters for an Arab girl—and a very possessive Arab girl. At any rate, she is still here, I have had a sort of lean-to rigged up in a little valley east of my own tent, but it is very embarrassing."

Nearly a month passed before I heard from Conder again, then came a second letter, with the news that on the eve of a great discovery—as he believed—but entire native staff—the whole fifty—had deserted one night in a body! "Two days' work," he wrote, "would have seen the tomb opened—for I am more than ever certain that my plans are accurate. Then I woke up this morning to find every man gone of my fellows missing! I went down into the village where a lot of them live, in a towering rage, but not one of the brutes was to be found, and their relations professed entire ignorance respecting their whereabouts. What caused me almost as much anxiety as the check in my work was the fact that Mahdeh—the Arab girl—had vanished also. I am wondering if the thing has any sinister significance."

Conder fumbled with the statement that he was making tremendous efforts to recruit a new gang. "But," said he, "I shall finish the excavation, if I have to do it with my own hands."

The third and last letter contained even stranger matters than the two preceding it. He had succeeded in borrowing a few men from the

British Archaeological Camp in the Fayûm. Then, just as the work was restarting, the Arab girl, Mahira, turned up again, and entreated him to bring her down the Nile, "at least as far as Dendera. For the vengeance of her tribesmen," stated Condor, "otherwise would result not only in her own death, but in mine! At the moment of writing I am in two minds what to do. If Mahira is to go upon this journey, I do not feel justified in sending her alone, and there is no one here who could perform the duty," etc.

I began to wonder, of course, and I had it in mind to take the train to Luxor merely in order to see this Arab maiden, who seemed to occupy so prominent a place in Condor's mind. However, Fate would have it otherwise, and the next thing I heard was that Condor had been brought into Care, and was at the English hospital.

He had been bitten by a cat—presumably from the neighbouring village, and although the doctor at Luxor dealt with the bite at once, travelled down with him, and placed him in the hand of the English man at the hospital, he died, as you remember, in the night of his arrival, raving mad, the Physician treatment failed entirely.

I never saw him before the end, but they told me that his hands were horribly like those of a cat. His eyes changed in some way, too, I understand, and, with his fingers all contracted, he tried to scratch everyone and everything within reach.

They had to strap the poor beggar down, and even then he tore the sheets into ribbons.

Well, as soon as possible, I made the necessary arrangements to finish Condor's inquiry. I had access to his papers, plans, etc., and in the spring of the same year I took up my quarters near Dîn-el-Bahri, roped off the approaches to the camp, stuck up the usual notices, and prepared to finish the excavation, which, I gathered, was in a fairly advanced state.

My first surprise came very soon after my arrival, for when, with the plan before me, I started out to find the shaft, I found it, certainly, but only with great difficulty.

It had been filled in again with sand and loose rock right to the very top!

II

All my inquiries availed me nothing. With what object the excavation had been thus closed I was unable to conjecture. That Condor had not reclosed it I was quite certain, for at the time of his mishap he had actually been at work at the bottom of the shaft, as inquiries from a native of Suefieh, in the Fayûm, who was his only companion at the time, had revealed.

In his eagerness to complete the inquiry, Condor, by lantern light,

had been engaged upon a solitary night-shift below, and the rabid cat had apparently fallen into the pit, probably in a frenzy of fear, it had attacked Condor, after which it had escaped.

Only this one man was with him, and he, for some reason that I could not make out, had apparently been sleeping in the temple—quite a considerable distance from Condor's camp. The poor fellow's eyes had aroused him, and he had met Condor running down the path and away from the shaft.

This however, was good evidence of the existence of the shaft at the time, and as I stood contemplating the tightly packed mounds which alone marked its site, I grew more and more mystified, for this task of reckoning the cutting represented much hard labor.

Beyond perfecting my plans in one or two particulars, I did little on the day of my arrival. I had only a handful of men with me, all of whom I knew, having worked with them before, and beyond clearing Condor's shaft I did not intend to excavate further.

Hatsau's Temple presents a lively enough scene in the daytime during the winter and early spring months, with the streams of tourists constantly passing from the white causeway to Cook's Red House on the edge of the desert. There had been a goodly number of visitors that day to the temple below, and one or two of the more curious and venturesome had scrambled up the steep path to the little plateau which was the scene of my operations. None had penetrated beyond the notice boards, however, and now, with the evening sky passing through those immensurable shades which defy palette and brush, which can only be distinguished by the trained eye, but which, from palest blue melt into exquisite pink, and by some magical combination form that deep violet which does not exist to perfection elsewhere than in the skies of Egypt, I found myself in the silence and the solitude of "the Holy Valley."

I stood at the edge of the plateau, looking out at the rosy belt which marked the course of the distant Nile, with the Arabian hills vaguely sketched beyond. The rocks stood up against that prospect as great black smudges, and what I could see of the causeway looked like a gray smut upon a dark canvas. Beneath me were the chambers of the Rock Temple, with their wall paintings depicting events in the reign of Hatsau which rank among the wonders of Egypt.

Not a sound disturbed my reverie, save a faint clatter of cooking utensils from the camp behind me—a decoration of that sacred solitude. Then a dog began to howl in the neighboring village. The dog ceased, and faintly to my ears came the note of a reed pipe. The breeze died away, and with it the piping.

I turned back to the camp stool, having partaken of a frugal supper, buried in upon my companion's bed, thoroughly enjoying my free-

dom from the routine of official life in Cairo, and looking forward to the morrow's work pleasantrily.

Under such circumstances a man sleeps well, and when, in an unctuous gray half-light, which probably heralded the dawn, I awoke with a start, I knew that something of an unusual nature alone could have disturbed my slumbers.

Firstly, then, I identified this with a concerted howling of the village dogs. They seemed to have conspired to make night hideous. I have never heard such an eerie like my life. Then it gradually began to die away, and I realized, secondly, that the howling of the dogs and my own awakening might be due to some common cause. This idea grew upon me and, as the howling subsided, a sort of despair possessed me and, despite my efforts to shake it off, grew more urgent with the passing of every moment.

In short, I fancied that the thing which had alarmed or enraged the dogs was passing from the village through the Holy Valley, upward to the Temple, upward to the plateau, and was approaching me.

I have never experienced an identical sensation since, but I seemed to be audience of a sort of psychic patrol, which, from a remote promissive, swelled fortissimo, to an intense but silent clama, which beat in some way upon my brain, but not through the faculty of hearing, for now the night was deathly still.

Yet I was possessed of some apprehension—of the coming of something sinister, and the suspense of waiting had become almost insupportable, so that I began to accuse my Spartan supper of having given me nightmare, when the tent-flap was suddenly raised and, outlined against the pale blue of the sky, with a sort of reflected ethereal light playing upon her face, I saw an Arab girl looking in at me!

By dint of exerting all my self-control I managed to restrain the cry and upward start which this apparition prompted. Quite still, with my hands tightly clenched, I lay and looked into the eyes which were looking into mine.

The style of literary work which it has been my lot to cultivate fails me in describing that beautiful and evil face. The features were severely classical and small, something of the Biedermeier type, with a cruel little mouth and a rounded chin, firm to hardness. In the eyes alone lay the languor of the Orient; they were exceedingly—indeed, excessively—long and narrow. The ordinary ragged, picturesque finery of a desert girl bedecked this midnight viscount, who, motionless, stood there watching me.

I once read a work by Pierre de l'Ancre, dealing with the Black Sabbath of the Middle Ages, and now the evil beauty of this Arab face threw my memory back to those singular pages, for, perhaps, owing to the reflected light which I have mentioned, although the

explanation scarcely seemed adequate, those long, narrow eyes shone carlike in the gloom.

Suddenly I made up my mind. Throwing the blanket from me, I leaped to the ground, and in a flash had gripped the girl by the wrists. Confuting some lingering doubts, she proved to be substantial enough. My electric tooth lay upon a box at the foot of the bed and, stooping, I caught it up and turned its searching rays upon the face of my captive.

She fell back from me, panting like a wild creature trapped, then dropped upon her knees and began to plead—began to plead in a voice and with a manner which touched some chord of consciousness that I could swear had never spoken before, and has never spoken since.

She spoke in Arabic, of course, but the words fell from her lips as liquid music in which lay all the beauty and all the deviltry of the "Siren's Song." Fully opening her astonishing eyes, she looked up at me and, with her free hand pressed to her bosom, told me how she had fled from an unwelcome marriage, how, an outcast and a pariah, she had hidden in the desert places for three days and three nights, sustaining life only by means of a few dates which she had brought with her, and quenching her thirst with stolen watermelons.

"I can bear it no longer, effendi! Another night out in the desert, with the cruel moon beating, beating, beating upon my brain, with creeping things coming out from the rocks, wriggling, wriggling, their many feet making whisperings in the sand—ah, it will kill me! And I am for ever outcast from my tribe, frown my people. No tent of all the Arabs, though I fly to the gates of Damaskus, is open to me, save I enter as shame, as a slave, as a plaything, as a toy. My heart—"furiously she beat upon her bosom—"is empty and desolate, effendi. I am meaner than the lowliest thing that creeps upon the sand, yet the God that made that creeping thing made me also—and you, you, who are merciful and strong, would not crush any creature because it was weak and helpless."

I had released her wrist now, and was looking down at her in a sort of stupor. The evil which at first I had seemed to perceive in her was effaced, wiped out as an artist wipes out an error in his drawing. Her dark beauty was speaking to me in a language of its own; a strange language, yet one so intelligible that I struggled in vain to disregard it. And her voice, her gestures, and the witch-like of her eyes were whipping up my blood to a fever heat of passionate sorrow—of despair. Yes, inexpressible as it sounds, despair!

In short, as I see it now, this siren of the wilderness was playing upon me as an accomplished musician might play upon a harp, striking this string and that at will, and sounding each with such full notes as they had rarely, if ever, emitted before.

Most damnable anomaly of all, I—Edward Neville, archaeologist, most prosy and matter-of-fact man in Cairo, perhaps—knew that this woman who had burst into my tent, upon whom I had set eyes for the first time scarce three minutes before, held me enthralled; and yet, with her wondrous eyes upon me, I could summon up no resentment, and could offer but poor resistance.

"In the Little Oasis, *effendi*, I have a sister who will admit me into her household, if only as a servant. There I can be safe, there I can rest. O English, at home in England you have a sister of your own! Would you see her pursued, a hunted thing from rock to rock, crouching for shelter in the lair of some jackal, stealing that she might live—and flying always, never resting, her heart leaping for fear, flying, flying, with nothing but dishonor before her?"

She shuddered and clasped my left hand in both her own convulsively, pulling it down to her bosom.

"There can be only one thing, *effendi*," she whispered. "Do you not see the white bones bleaching in the sun?"

Throwing all my resolution into the act, I released my hand from her clasp and, turning aside, sat down upon the box which served me as chair and table, too.

A thought had come to my assistance, had strengthened me in the moment of my greatest weakness; it was the thought of that Arab girl mentioned in Condor's letter. And a scheme of things, an incredible scheme, that embraced and explained some, if not all, of the horrible circumstances attendant upon his death, began to form in my brain.

Bizarre it was, stretching out beyond the realm of things natural and proper, yet I clung to it, for there, in the solitude, with this wildly beautiful creature lurking at my feet, and with her uncanny powers of fascination yet enveloping me like a cloak, I found it not so improbable as inevitably it must have seemed at another time.

I turned my head, and through the gloom sought to look into the long eyes. As I did so they closed and appeared as two darkly luminous slits in the perfect oval of the face.

"You are an impostor!" I said in Arabic, speaking firmly and deliberately. "To Mr. Condor"—I could have sworn that she started slightly at sound of the name—"you called yourself Mahiba. I know you, and I will have nothing to do with you."

But in saying it I had to turn my head aside, for the strangest, maddest impulses were building up in my brain in response to the glances of those half-shut eyes.

I reached for my coat, which lay upon the foot of the bed, and, taking out some loose money, I placed fifty piasters in the motionless brown hand.

"That will enable you to reach the Little Oasis, if such is your desire," I said. "It is all I can do for you, and now—you must go."

The light of the dawn was growing stronger insensibly, so that I could see my visitor quite clearly. She rose to her feet, and stood before me, a straight, slim figure, swaying air from head to foot with such a glance of passionate contempt as I had never known or suffered.

She threw back her head magnificently, dashed the money on the ground at my feet and, turning, leaped out of the tent.

For a moment I hesitated, doubting, questioning my humanity, testing my fears, then I took a step forward, and peered out across the plateau. Not a soul was in sight. The rocks stood up gray and craggy, and beneath lay the carpet of the desert stretching unbroken to the shadows of the Nile Valley.

III.

We commenced the work of clearing the shaft at an early hour that morning. The strangest ideas were now playing in my mind, and in some way I felt myself to be in opposition to definite enmity. My excavators labored with a will and, once we had penetrated below the first three feet or so of tightly packed stone, it became a mere matter of shoveling, for apparently the lower part of the shaft had been filled up principally with sand.

I calculated that four days' work at the outside would see the shaft clear to the base of Condie's excavation. There remained, according to his own notes, only another six feet or so; but it was solid flaeestone—the roof of the passage, if his plans were correct, communicating with the tomb of Hatau.

With the approach of night, tired as I was, I felt little inclination for sleep. I lay down on my bed with a small Browning pistol under the pillow, but after an hour or so of nervous listening, drifted off into slumber. As on the night before, I awoke shortly before the coming of dawn.

Again the village dogs were raising a hideous outcry, and again I was keenly conscious of some over-watching menace. This consciousness grew stronger as the bawling of the dogs grew fainter, and the sense of approach assailed me as on the previous occasion.

I sat up immediately with the pistol in my hand and, gently raising the tent flap, looked out over the darkened plateau. For a long time I could perceive nothing, then, vaguely outlined against the sky, I detected something that moved above the rocky edge.

It was so indefinite in form that for a time I was unable to identify it, but as it slowly rose higher and higher, two luminous eyes—absolutely feline eyes, since they glinted grossly in the darkness—came into view. In character and in shape they were the eyes of a cat, but in point of size they were larger than the eyes of any cat I had ever seen.

Not were they jackal eyes. It occurred to me that some predatory beast from the Sudan might conceivably have strayed thus far north.

The presence of such a creature would account for the nightly disturbance amongst the village dogs, and, dismissing the superstitious notions which had led me to associate the mysterious Arab *gari* with the phenomenon of the howling dogs, I seized upon this new idea with a sort of gladness.

Stepping boldly out of the tent, I struck in the direction of the gleaming eyes. Although my only weapon was the Browning pistol, it was a weapon of considerable power and, moreover, I counted upon the well-known cowardice of nocturnal animals. I was not disappointed in the result.

The eyes dropped out of sight, and as I leaped to the edge of rock overhanging the Temple a little shape went streaking off in the grayness beneath me. Its coloring appeared to be black, but this appearance may have been due to the bad light. Certainly it was no cat, was no jackal, and once, twice, thence my flouncing sped into the darkness.

Apparently I had not scared a hit, but the loud reports of the weapon roused the men sleeping in the camp, and soon I was surrounded by a ring of suspiring faces.

But there I stood on the rock edge, looking out across the desert in silence. Something in the long, luminous eyes, something in the small, flying shape had spoken to me intently, horribly.

Hassan es-Sugra, the headman, touched my arm, and I knew that I must offer some explanation.

"Jackals," I said shakily. And with an other word I walked back to my tent.

The night passed without further event, and in the morning we addressed ourselves to the work with such a will that I saw, to my satisfaction, that by noon of the following day the labor of clearing the loose sand would be completed.

During the preparation of the evening meal I became aware of a certain disquiet in the camp, and I noted a dislocation on the part of the native Libyans to stay far from the tents. They hung together in a group, and whilst individually they seemed to avoid meeting my eye, collectively they watched me in a furtive fashion.

A gang of Modern stalkmen calls for delicate handling, and I wondered if, inadvertently, I had transgressed in some way their unbound code of conduct. I called Hassan es-Sugra aside.

"What ails the men?" I asked him. "Have they some grievance?"

Hassan spread his palms elegantly.

"If they have," he replied, "they are secret about it, and I am not in their confidence. Shall I thrash three or four of them in order to learn the nature of this grievance?"

"No, thanks all the same," I said, laughing at the characteristic pro-

posal. "If they refuse to work to-morrow, there will be time enough for you to adopt those measures."

On this, the third night of my sojourn in the Holy Valley by the Temple of Haten, I slept soundly and uninterrupted. I had been looking forward with the keenest zest to the morrow's work, which promised to bring me within sight of my goal, and when Hassan came to awaken me, I leaped out of bed immediately.

Hassan *es-Sugra*, having performed his duty, did not, as was his custom, retire, he stood there, a tall, angular figure looking at me strangely.

"Well?" I said.

"There is trouble," was his simple reply. "Follow me, Neville El-Kash."*

Wondering greatly, I followed him across the plateau and down the slope to the excavation. There I pulled up short with a cry of amazement.

Charter's shaft was filled in to the very top, and presented, to my astonished gaze, much the same aspect that had greeted me upon my first arrival!

"The men——" I began.

Hassan *es-Sugra* spread wide his palms.

"Gone!" he replied. "Those Coptic dogs, those eaters of canons, have fled in the night."

"And this"—I pointed to the little mound of broken granite and sand—"is their work?"

"So it would seem," was the reply, and Hassan sniffed his sublime contempt.

I stood looking bitterly at this destruction of my toils. The strangeness of the thing at the moment did not strike me, in my anger, I was only concerned with the outrageous impudence of the missing workmen, and if I could have laid hands upon one of them it had surely gone hard with him.

As for Hassan *es-Sugra*, I believe he would cheerfully have broken the necks of the entire gang. But he was a man of resource.

"It is so newly filled in," he said, "that you and I, in three days, or in four, can restore it to the state it had reached when those nameless dogs, who regularly payed with their shoes on, those drowsers of perch, began their duty work."

His example was stimulating; I was not going to be beaten, either.

After a hasty breakfast, the pair of us set to work with pick and shovel and basket. We worked at those slaves must have worked whose toil was directed by the lash of the Pharaoh's overseer. My back acquired an almost permanent crook, and every muscle in my body seemed to be on fire. Not even in the midday heat did we slacken or stop our toils, and when dusk fell that night a great mound had arisen

beyond Condor's shaft, and we had excavated to a depth it had taken me, going double the time to reach.

When at last we threw down our tools in utter exhaustion, I held out my hand to Hassan, and seized his brown fist enthusiastically. His eyes sparkled as he met my glance.

"Neville Elford!" he said, "you are a true Moslem!"

And only the initiated can know how high was the compliment conveyed.

That night I slept the sleep of utter weariness, yet it was not a dreamless sleep, or perhaps it was not so deep as I supposed, for blazing cat-eyes encircled me in my dreams, and a constant feline howling seemed to fill the night.

When I awoke the sun was blazing down upon the rock outside my tent and, springing out of bed, I perceived, with amazement, that the morning was far advanced. Indeed, I could hear the distant voices of the donkey-boys and other halings of the coming tourists.

Why had Hassan es-Suga not awakened me?

I stepped out of the tent and called him in a loud voice. There was no reply. I ran across the plateau to the edge of the hollow.

Condor's shaft had been reclosed to the top!

Language fails me to convey the wave of anger, amazement, incredulity, which swept over me. I looked across to the deserted camp and back to my own tent. I looked down at the mound, where but a few hours before had been a pit; and seriously I began to question whether I was mad or whether madness had seized upon all who had been with me. Then, pegged down upon the heap of broken stones, I perceived, fluttering, a small piece of paper.

Dully I walked across and picked it up. Hassan, a man of some education, clearly was the writer. It was a pencil scrawl in doubtful Arabic and, not without difficulty, I deciphered it as follows:

"Fly, Neville Elford! This is a haunted place!"

Standing there by the mound, I tore the scrap of paper into minute fragments, bitterly casting them from me upon the ground. It was incredible; it was insane.

The man who had written that absurd message, the man who had undone his own work, had the reputation of being fearless and biterable. He had been with me before a score of times, and had quelled patty-matches in the camp in a manner which marked him a born outracer. I could not understand, I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses.

What did I do?

I suppose there are some who would have abandoned the thing at once and for always, but I take it that the national traits are strong within me. I went over to the camp and prepared my own breakfast; then, shouldering pack and shovel, I went down into the valley and set

to work. What ten men could not do, what two men had failed to do, one man was determined to do.

It was about half an hour after commencing my task, and when, I suppose, the surprise and rage occasioned by the discovery had begun to wear off, that I found myself making comparisons between my own case and that of Conder. It became more and more evident to me that events—mysterious events—were repeating themselves.

The frightful happenings attendant upon Conder's death were marshaling in my mind. The sun was blazing down upon me, and distant voices could be heard in the desert stillness. I knew that the plain below was dotted with pleasure-seeking tourists, yet nervous terrors shook me. Frankly, I dreaded the coming of the night.

Well, toroacity or pugnacity conquered, and I worked on until dusk. My supper despatched, I sat down on my bed and toyed with the Browning.

I realized already that sleep, under existing conditions, was impossible. I perceived that on the morrow I must abandon my one-man enterprise, pocket my pride, in a sense, and seek new associates, new companions.

The fact was coming home to me conclusively that a menace, real and not mythical, hung over that valley. Although, in the morning sunlight and filled with regeneration, I had thought contemptuously of Hassan en-Sagra, now, in the mysterious violet dusk so conducive to calm consideration, I was forced to admit that he was at least as brave a man as I. And he had fled! What did that night hold in keeping for us?

* * * * *

I will tell you what occurred, and it is the only explanation I have to give of why Conder's shaft, said to communicate with the real tomb of Hassan, to this day remains unopened.

There, on the edge of my bed, I sat far into the night, not daring to close my eyes. But physical weariness conquered at the end and, although I have no recollection of its coming, I must have succumbed to sleep, since I remember—can never forget—a repetition of the dream, or what I had assumed to be a dream, of the night before.

A ring of blazing green eyes surrounded me. At one point this ring was broken, and in a kind of nightmare pose, I leaped at that promise of safety, and found myself outside the tent.

Lithe, shikung shapes hemmed me in—cat shapes, ghoul shapes veritable figures of the pit. And the eyes, the shapes, although they wore the eyes and shapes of cats, sometimes changed elusively, and became the wicked eyes and the sinuous, writhing shapes of serpents. Always the ring was incomplete, and always I retreated in the

only direction by which retreat was possible. I retreated from those cat-things.

In this fashion I came at last to the shaft, and there I saw the tools which I had left at the end of my day's toil.

Looking round me, I saw also, with such a pang of horror as I cannot hope to convey to you, that the ring of green eyes was now unbroken about me.

And it was closing in.

Nameless feline creatures were crowding silently to the edge of the pit, some preparing to spring down upon me where I stood. A voice seemed to speak in my brain; it spoke of capitulation, telling me to accept defeat lest, resisting, my fate be the fate of Condor.

Peals of shrill laughter rose upon the silence. The laughter was mine.

Filling the night with this hideous, hysterical merriment, I was working feverishly with pick and with shovel filling in the shaft.

The end? The end is that I awoke, in the morning, lying, not on my bed, but outside on the plateau, my hands torn and bleeding and every muscle in my body thrashing agonizingly. Remembering my dream—for even in that moment of awakening I thought I had dreamed—I staggered across to the valley of the excavation.

Condor's shaft was reckoned to the top.

The Kelpie

by Mualy Wade Wellman.

The trouble with many writers of weird gurus is the tendency to stick to the old and established gurus—and not to take the time to dig into the voluminous supernatural camping found in the pages of folklore. Certainly there are many good tales to be written about the other spectral beings of nature—the spirits of field and tree and stream. Here we have an example of such a creature. Meet the kelpie, a pet not recommended to have aquatic friends. Just why, you'll see.



NO SOONER had Cannon closed and latched the door than Lu was in his arms, and they were kissing with the hungry fervor of lovers who doubt their own good fortune. Thus for a delicious, heart-battering moment, then Lu pulled nervously away.

"We're being watched," she whispered breathlessly.

The big, dark man laughed down at her wounded blue eyes, her shining wealth of silken hair, her face like an ivory heart, the apprehensive tautness of her slender figure. "That's guilty conscience, Lu," he teased. "You knew I wouldn't have invited you to my apartment without giving my man the night off. And even if someone did see us, why be afraid? Don't we love each other?"

She allowed him to bring her into the parlor and draw her down beside him on a divan, but she still moved apprehensively.

"I could swear there were eyes upon us," she insisted, half apologetically. "Hostile eyes."

"Maybe they're spirits," Cannon cried gayly, his own twinkling gaze sweeping around to view in turn the paintings on the walls, the loaded lamps, the bookshelves, the rich, comfortable furniture, the big box-shaped aquarium in the darkest corner. Again he chuckled. "Spirits—that's a pun, you know. The lowest form of wit."

From a taboret at his elbow he lifted a decanter of brandy and poured two drinks with a languorous flourish. Lu, forgetting her uneasiness of a moment before, lifted her glass. "To us," she toasted.

But Cannon set his own drink down unlit and peered around a second time, this time without gaiety. "You've got me thinking it now," he muttered.

"Thinking what?"

"That something is watching—and not liking what it sees." He glanced quickly over his shoulder, then continued, as if seeking to reassure them both. "Nothing in that corner, of course, except the aquarium."

"What's the latest tonystry there?" Lu asked, glad to change the disquieting subject.

"Some Scotch water plants—new laboratory project." Cannon was at ease the moment his hobby came into the conversation. "They arrived this afternoon in a sealed tin box. Doctor MacKenzie's letter says they were gathered from the Foul Kelp, whenever that is in his highland wilderness. I'm letting them soak and wash overnight. In the morning I'll be giv' experimental."

Lu stopped mter briefly, her eyes interested. "Foul Kelp," she repeated. "It sounds seaweed."

"But these are fresh-water growths. As I say, I never heard of the pool before," Cannon broke off. "Here, though, why talk botany when we can——"

His lips abusely smothered hers, his arms gathered her so close as to bruise her. But even as she yielded happily to his embrace the telephone rang loudly in the front entry. Cannon released her with a muttered curse of impatience, rose and hurried out to answer. He closed the door behind him, and her voice, muffled and indistinct, sounded aggrieved as he spoke into the transmitter.

Lu, fanning her heated skin, picked up the drink Cannon had set down. As she lifted it to her lips she glanced idly over the rim of the glass at the moist tangle in the aquarium. In the dim light it seemed to fall into all manner of rich greens—darkest emerald, beryl, malachite, olive, grass, lettuce. Something moved, too, slipped and swerved in the heart of the little submerged grove.

Cannon was still talking. Lu rose, drunk in hand, to stroll curiously toward the big glass box. As she did so the moving trill seemed to glide upward toward the surface. Coming closer yet, Lu paused to peer in the half-light.

A fish? If so, a very green fish and a very small one—perhaps a tadpole. A bublike剥皮 on top of the water. Lu, genuinely interested, bent closer, just as something rose through the little ripples and hooked its tip on the rim of the aquarium.

It was a tiny, spindali-colored hand.

Half a second later another fringe of tiny fingers appeared, clutching the rim in turn. Lu, woodously motionless, stared in her effort to rationalize. She could see the tiny digits, each tapering and flexible, each armed with a jet-colored claw. Through the glass, under and behind the fingers, she made out thumbs—slit, opposable thumbs—and smooth, wet palms of a dead, oyster gray. Her breath caught in mute, helpless astonishment. A blunt head rose slowly into view behind and

Between the fists, something with flat brows, broad bump of nose and wide mouth, like a grotesque Mayan mask—and it was growing.

Lu told herself, a little stupidly, that she must not have seen clearly at first. She had thought the creature a little green minnow, but it was as big as a squirrel. No, as big as a baby! Its bright eyes, white-ringed, flared brows, projecting a wave of malignant challenge that staggered her like a blow. The full, lead-lined lips parted loosely and the lusted tip of a purple tongue quivered out for a moment. A stinky odor steamed up to Lu's nostrils, making her dizzy and weak. Wet, scabby-green shoulders had heaved into view by now, and after them the twin mounds of a grotesquely feminine bosom. The thing was climbing out at her, and as it did so it swelled and grew, grew . . .

The brandy-glass fell from her hand and loudly exploded into splatters upon the floor. The sound of the breaking gave Lu back her voice, and she screamed tremulously, then managed to move back and away, half stumbling and half staggering. The monster, all damp and green and stinking, was writhing a leg into view. Lu noted that, and then everything went into a whirling white blur and she began to collapse.

Faintly she heard the rush of Cannon's feet, felt the clutch of his strong arms as though many thicknesses of fabric separated them from her. He almost shouted her name in panic. After a moment her sight and mind cleared, and she looked up into his concerned face. With all her shaken strength she clung to him.

"That thing," she chattered, "that horrid female thing in the aquarium—"

Cannon managed a comforting tone. "But there's nothing, decent, nothing at all. These two brandies—you took mine, too, you shameless glutinon—went to your head."

"Look at it!" She pointed an unsteady finger. "Deep down there in the weeds."

He looked. "Oh, that?" he laughed. "I noticed it, too, just before you came. It's a little frog or toad—must have been gathered with the weeds and shipped all the way from Scotland."

Lu caressed her shivering forehead with her slender white hand and mumbled something about "sorring things." Already she believed that she had somehow discerned of the green water-monster. Still, it was a distinct effort to walk with Cannon to the aquarium and look in.

Through the thick tangle of vines and fronds that made a dark stew in the water she could make out a tiny something that wriggled and glided. It was only minnow-size after all, and seemed smooth and innocuous. Funny what notions two quick drinks will give you. . . . She lowered a cupped palm toward the surface, as if to scoop down and seize the little creature, but the chilly touch of the taproot weed-tips repelled her, and she drew back her arm.

"You'd never catch it," Cannon told her. "It won't wait for you to grab. I had a try when I first saw it, and got a wet sleeve—and this."

He held out his left hand. For the first time that evening Lu saw the gold band that he wore on his third finger.

"A ring," her lover explained. "I was lying on the bottom. Apparently it came with the weeds, too."

"You put it on your wedding finger?" Lu wailed.

"That was the only one it would fit," Cannon defended as she caught his hand and tugged with all her might at the ring. It did not budge.

"Please," she begged, "get rid of it."

"Why, Lu, what's the trouble? Are you being jealous because a present was given me by that mess of weed—or maybe by the little lady frog?"

The tiny swimmer in the tank splashed water, as if in punctuation of his joke, and Cannon, falling abruptly silent, suddenly began wrenching at the gold circle. But not even his strength, twice that of Lu, could bring it over the joint.

"Here I don't like this," he announced, his voice steady but a little tight. "I'm going to put soap on my finger. That will make the thing slip off."

Lu made no reply, but her eyes encouraged him. Cannon kissed her pale forehead, strode across the room and into a little corridor beyond. After a moment Lu could hear the spurt of a water jet in a bowl, then the sound of industrious scrubbing with lather.

In command of herself once again but still a trifle faint and shaky, Lu leaned her hand lightly upon the thick, smooth edge of the aquarium glass. A fond little smile came to her lips as she pondered on Cannon's eagerness to please her whims. Not even in a silly little matter like this one did he cross her will or offer argument that might embarrass or hurt her. The shedding of that ring would be a symbol between them, of understanding and faith.

Her eyes dropped to the table that stood against the aquarium, with its litter of papers and notebooks. At the edge nearest Lu lay a thick volume bound in gray—a dictionary. What was the term she had puzzled over? Oh, yes. . . . Still leaning with one hand on the glass, she flipped the book open with the other and turned the pages to the K's:

Kelp Any one of various large brown seaweeds of the families *Laminariaceae* and *Fucus*.

Her hazy memory had been right, then, about the word. But why should a body of fresh water be called Pool Kelp? Glancing back at the page, her eyes caught the next definition.

It answered her question.

Kelpie (Gael. Myth.) A malicious water spirit or demon believed

to haunt streams or marshes. Sometimes it falls in love with human beings, striving jealously against mortal rivals.

The words swam before her vision, for the snake-snell had risen sickeningly around her. And something was gripping the hand that rested on the rim of the tank.

Lu's mouth opened but, as before, mere throttled her. Like a sleeper in the throes of nightmare, she struggled half-heartedly. She dared not look, yet some power forced her head around.

The grip had shifted to her wrist. Long claw-tipped fingers were clamped there—fingers as large as her own, webbed green and of a seamy chill. Lu's eyes slid in fascinated horror along the scale-edged, coiled arm to the mottled-looking body, stock and festooned over with weird-frank, that was rising from the water. Another foul hand stole swiftly out, fastened on Lu's shoulder, and jerked her close. The flat protuberant face, grown to human size, was level with hers; its eyes triumphant within their dead white rings, its dark tongue quivering between gaping lips.

Yet again Lu tried to find her voice. All she could achieve was a wordless moan, no louder than a sigh.

"Did you call, sweetheart?" came Cannon's cheery response from his washing. "I'll be with you in a minute now; this thing is still hanging on like a poor relation!"

The reptilian jaw dropped suddenly, like the lid of a box turned upside down. Lu stared into the slate-gray case that was the yawning mouth. Teeth, sharp teeth, gleamed there—not one row, but many.

Lu's hands lifted frantically in an effort at defense, then dropped wearily to her sides. The monster crinkled its furred features in something like a triumphant grin. Then its blunt head shot forward with incredible swiftness,razzing Lu at the junction of neck and shoulder.

For a moment she felt exquisite pain, as of many piercing needles. After that she neither felt, heard nor saw anything.

The medical examiner was drawing a sheet over the still, agonized body of the dead girl. The police sergeant, scuffing his foot notes, addressed Cannon with official sternness.

"Sorry," he said, "but you haven't explained this business at all satisfactorily. You come down to headquarters with me."

Cannon glanced warily up from his scoreless wrestling with the ring that would not quit his writhing fingers. "I didn't do it," he reiterated dully.

The medical examiner was also speaking, more to himself than anyone. "An autopsy might clear up some points. Those inflamed, supplicated wounds on the neck might have been made by a big water-snake. Or," he added, with a crafty glance at the sergeant, "by a poisoned weapon constructed to simulate such a creature's bite."

Cannon's last vestige of control went. "I tell you," he snarled desperately, "that she and I were the only living things here tonight—the only living things." He broke off, becoming aware of movement in the aquarium. "Except, of course, that little frog in there."

The creature among the weeds, a tiny sliver of sable greenness, cavorted for a moment on the surface of the water as it is exultation, then, before any of the three watchmen could get a fair look at it, dived deep into the heart of the Boating mesa.

The Captured Cross-Section

by Miles J. Breuer, M.D.

For more imaginative writers got hold of the concept advanced by higher mathematicians of a hypothetical "fourth" dimension, or have been treated to a vast amount of explanation and simplification. With convincing logic, we have been shown that this new dimension—at right angles to those we know—presumably, at density, in a parallel world, is infinity, and so forth. Actually the fourth dimension remains as mysterious as ever—a mere mathematical premise. In this early science-fiction classic, Dr. Breuer presents one aspect of a fourth-dimensional participation . . . on assessing one which embodies all of the qualities of an object having the ability to find an easier way out of a perfectly sealed box than that possessed by Houghsy.

THE HEAD of Jiles Heagry, Instructor in Mathematics, was bent low over the sheets of figures, and becomingly close to it, leered the curly-haired one of his fiancee, Sheila Mathers, daughter of the Head of the Mathematics Department. Sheila was no mean mathematician herself, and had published some original papers.

"Are you trying to tell me that this stuff makes any sense?" she laughed, shaking her head over the stack of papers.

"Your father couldn't follow it either," Heagry answered. "He used abusive language at me when I showed it to him."

"Now don't be mean to my father. Someday you'll learn that under his blustering exterior he has a heart of gold. But what do these things mean, and what did you bring me in here for?"

"You have followed through Einstein's equations for the transformation of coordinates, have you not?" Heagry explained. "Well, this is Einstein's stuff, only I've carried it further than he did."

"It doesn't look the same—" Sheila shook her head.

"That is because I am using four coordinates. The most complicated existing equations, with the three coordinates x , y , and z , and involving three equations each with the variables:

$$\begin{array}{lll} x_1 & y_1 & z_1 \\ x_2 & y_2 & z_2 \\ x_3 & y_3 & z_3 \end{array}$$

require that you keep in mind nine equations at a time. That is a heavy burden and relatively few men are able to do it. Here I have four coordinates, w , x , y , and z , and the variables:

W_1	X_1	Y_1	Z_1
W_2	X_2	Y_2	Z_2
W_3	X_3	Y_3	Z_3
W_4	X_4	Y_4	Z_4

and requiring that I carry in my mind sixteen equations at one time. That may seem impossible, but I've drilled myself at it for two years, and gradually I was able to go farther and farther—"

"But there are other quantities here," Sheila interrupted, studying the paper intently, "that do not belong in equations for the rotation of coordinates. They look like the integrals in electromagnetic equations."

"Good for you!" Heugger cried enthusiastically. "That pretty little head has something on the mind, too. That is just exactly what they call electromagnetic integrals. You see, the rotation of coordinates looks very pretty in theory, but when you hook it up with a little practical dynamics—don't you understand yet?"

Sheila stared at the young mathematician in questioning wonder.

"Sheila, just, you're just irresistible that way. I can't help it." He gathered her in his arms, and kissed her face in a dozen places. She pushed him away.

"No more until you tell me what this is about. I mean it!" She stamped her foot, but a merry smile contorted her stern frown.

"You're just like your father when you're like that," he said, taking up the papers again. "Very simple little conception," he continued. "Why be satisfied with rotating coordinates on paper? Here's a way to rotate them in concrete, physical reality."

"Listen now. When you rotate two coordinates through ninety degrees, you have an ordinary where there previously was an abscissa. If you rotate three coordinates through ninety degrees, you can make a vertical plane occupy a horizontal position. Now—suppose you rotate four coordinates through forty-five degrees, you can then make a portion of space occupy a new position, outside of what we know as space. And we can bring into this space of ours a portion of the unknown space along the fourth coordinate—"

"The fourth dimension!" gasped Sheila.

"There it is on paper. But we're going to do it in reality. This—" pointing across the room—"are the coils by means of which we can rotate some real space. I want you to see the preliminary trial. As I do not know just exactly what may happen, I am going to rotate only a small portion to begin with."

Sheila's eyes gleamed with excited comprehension.

"Call father in. He's just across the corridor—"

"Not for the very first trial. I want you to see that alone. After we know what it will do—"

"But it may be dangerous. Something may happen!"

"You think it might injure the furniture or damage the building? For the preliminary trial I shall rotate it only for an instant and turn it back unbroken."

She clung to his arm nervously while he grasped the black handle of the switch and threw it down, waited a few seconds, and pulled it out again.

They saw nothing. There was a crash, instantaneously loud, and fading almost instantly to a distant, muffled rumble, and ceasing suddenly. There was a heavy thud and a pounding on the floor. Sheba gave a little scream.

There in front of them was a rapidly moving object, it bounced up and down off the floor to a height of three feet about once a second. It did not have the harmonic motion of a bouncing body, however; it stopped abruptly up in the air and shot downward at high speed, hit the floor, stopped a moment and shot back upward. Then it stopped suddenly and hung in the air. It was about the size of a large watermelon, and looked for all the world like human skin: smooth, taut, unbroken all around.

The two stared at it amazed. Henry walked up and touched it with the tip of a finger. It grew smaller. And suddenly it decreased to about one-half its former size, retaining its surface smoothness and uniformity unchanged.

It had felt soft and warm, like human flesh.

Now it was increasing in size again, while they stared gasping, speechless, at it. When it stopped growing suddenly, it was the size of a big hen's egg, with rounded ends. There was a bulging ridge around the middle, on each side of which was a dark brown strap of something like leather. The rest of it was just naked skin.

Sheba and Henry stood rooted to the spot, staring at it and at each other. What was the thing? Where had it come from?

The Thing began thumping up and down off the floor again, with great, thudding shocks. After a while it desisted and lay still. It was a most uncouth, hideous looking thing, a great lump of naked flesh with two straps around it. It looked for all the world like some huge batter in a medical museum, or like some monstrosity of birth. Could it be alive?

Both of them approached it cautiously. Henry poked it with a pin. The skin was tough and he jabbed hard. A drop of blood appeared.

Then there was a terrible crimsonation. The object decreased in size to a small sphere like a baseball. In fact, there were several baseball-sized lumps of flesh all around, just naked flesh. They moved rapidly, and two of them were between him and Sheba. Two or three were on the far side of her. He counted ten of them altogether. Five of them closed swiftly around her. Then she was gone!

Her scream, cut suddenly short, still rang in his ears. And she was gone! Suddenly vanished from in front of him! He groped about, feeling for her in the empty air, but there was nothing anywhere. There lay the watermelon-like lump of flesh that he had first seen. It was on the floor and lay quite still. And she was gone! He held his head distractedly.

The door opened and Professor Mathews, Sheila's father, came in. "What's going on here?" he demanded, blinking his eyes.

Heagey stared blankly, trying to think.

"This shumping and vercimung?" the professor continued.

"I think I begin to understand," Heagey began.

"Thank you, understand!" the professor shouted. "What have you done to my daughter? She doesn't scream for nothing."

He caught sight of the ovoid lump of flesh. He turned pale and stopped as if frozen. Some terrible thought crossed his mind, connecting it with his daughter; had some nefarious experiment turned her into that thing?

"What's that?" he snapped savagely.

"Something's got to be done," Heagey said, chiefly to himself. "We've got to bring her back here. I'm afraid to manipulate the thing too many times, the Lord only knows what else it may dip up."

The professor glared.

"You sound like a first-rate man-e-depressive crazy man—"

"Wait till I shut that thing up," Heagey said, getting a hold on himself, "and I'll explain all I know about this. I was getting ready to try to rotate a dog out of space, and so I have a new, strong dog-cage here."

He set the dog-cage down beside the lump of flesh, very gently, very slowly, he pushed it in. His touch receded at the warm, soft feel of it, but he got it into the cage and locked the door. Then he set out a chair for the professor, but his hand shook, for his mind was on Sheila.

He sat down facing the professor, his back to the cage. Suddenly the professor's face fell, and his eyes stared ahead with a look of utter blankness. Heagey whirled around and looked at his "specimen." It was out of the cage!

There hadn't been a sound. His eyes had not been off it for ten seconds. The cage was still locked. There it lay, there feet away from the cage, only it wasn't the same. There were two pieces of it now, long, cylindrical, rounded at the ends, like a couple of legs without knees or feet. Heagey got up and unlocked the cage, noting that it required fifteen seconds. He felt around inside the cage with his hands, but found nothing.

"Alice all," he sighed, "it is very simple."

The professor stared at him now thoroughly convinced that he was

erary. Heagey explained about his stolen equations and how readily they interlocked with the electromagnetic integrals, and of how the very simple application of any form of electromagnetic energy would rotate four coordinates.

"I wanted her to see the preliminary experiment I used but little power on a small field. Just opened a little trap-door into space, so to speak. There is only one explanation for what has happened here. I rotated a portion of a fourth dimension, and left a hole in hyperspace for an instant. Just as if you rotate up a portion of the floor, there will be a hole left. As chance would have it, just at that moment some inhabitant of hyperspace came along and stumbled into it, and I swung back on him and caught him."

"There he is, stuck. What we see and feel is a cross-section of him, a solid cross-section of that part of him that is cut by our three-dimensional space. See? If I stick my finger through this sheet of paper, the two-dimensional inhabitants on its surface will perceive only a circle. At first the nail occupies a portion of its circumference, as I push my finger on through, the nail is gone, and folds and ridges appear and disappear. If my whole hand goes through, the circle increases greatly in size. If they draw a circle around my finger and try to imprison it, I can withdraw it and stick it through somewhere else, and they cannot understand how it was done —"

"But what about Sheila? Where is she?"

Heagey's face dropped. He had been full of interest and exultation in his problem. The reminder of her was an icy shock.

"There is only one possible conclusion," he went on in a dead voice. "The struggles of the fourth-dimensional creature except her cast into hyperspace."

The professor sprang up and walked rapidly out of the room. There was something determined in his stride. He slammed the door. Heagey sat down and thought. Somehow he must rescue Sheila.

How could it be done? Should he try the rotation again? He had all the figures and could repeat it accurately. But, that would not be at all certain to get her back. The captured fourth-dimensional creature might get away. Heagey didn't want to lose him. Not only that he wanted to study him, but somehow he felt that he must hang on to the only link with that world where Sheila was now lost.

The thought of its getting away worried him. How could he make sure that it would not escape? He reasoned back to the plane section of a three-dimensional object. Enclosing it in a circle would do no good. But, if tied tightly with a circle of rope, it might be kept from turning up and down. Analogically, if he could get this thing into some sort of a tight bag, he might feel free to flip his trap-door once more. And then came the brilliant idea!

He could sail out into hyperspace and look for Sheila!

He got the lump of flesh fastened up tight in a canvas sack and lashed the other end of the stout rope with which he tied it around a concrete pillar. Then the door opened and two policemen walked in, followed by the professor. He was urging them on. "There he is! Grab him!" he seemed to say in attitude and gesture, though not in words.

A pang of alarm shot through Heagey. He was needed right here to rescue Sheila. What would become of her if they locked him up? His mind as usual worked quickly and logically, in contradiction to the professor's, who seemed to have been thrown into an unreasoning rage by his daughter's disappearance. He sprang to his switch-board and shouted:

"Stop!"

Something in his determined attitude alarmed the policemen, his hand on the ominous-looking apparatus might mean something. They stopped.

"What's this? What do you want?" Heagey demanded,

The professor's staccato broke loose.

"He murdered my daughter! Made away with her. I've got a warrant for his arrest. Nowversical twaddle about the fourth dimension. Prosecute him to the hilt, that's what I'll do. Been hanging around her too much. He's crazy. Throw him in jail. Make him bring her back!"

Heagey laughed a desperate laugh, which made the other three more certain that he was a dangerous maniac.

"Like throwing debtors into jail," Heagey decided acidly. "Fat chance of paying the debt then! Move another step and I'll throw the three of you into unknown hyperspace."

They were all afraid, of they knew not what. Heagey outlined to them that he wanted to go out into hyperspace and search for Sheila. But he would tie himself on a rope fastened at this end. And he wanted someone here at the end, who was friendly to him, to manage things. He telephoned out for a rope and for two of his students. The policemen watched, too puzzled to know what to do. The professor acquiesced, more from fear, like a man at the point of a gun, than because he saw the reason of it.

The rope was delivered and the two students, Adkins and Bremer, arrived. They helped him fix a firm sling around his shoulders, waist, and thighs. The loose rope was coiled up on the floor several hundred feet of it, and the other end tied to a concrete pillar. There was some amazed staring by the students at the waitting thing in the canvas sack.

"I'll tell you about that later," Heagey said. "All the pointers and dials are set. All you need to do is to throw this switch and jerk it back at once. Adkins, you do that; and, Bremer, you watch the rope.

When I signal by jerking it six times, Adkins, you throw the switch again the same way."

That was all. Without another word Adkins threw the switch. There was the same crash, instantaneously muffled and almost suddenly fading away as at a distance. There was a momentary sensation of agitation, though nothing really moved.

Heagey was gone. The loose end of the rope that had tied him lay on the floor. It was certainly a breathless thing. The professor stared with a sort of vacant expression on his face, as though the solid ground had suddenly dropped from beneath his feet. It dawned upon him that perhaps Sheila had really dropped out that way.

Beecher picked up the end of the rope. It was not an end; it merely looked that way. There was a strong traction on it, in fact it soon began to slip through his hands, and end after end was drawn off the pile on the floor, and simply vanished. For a while it stopped and then went on unwinding.

The policemen gazed blankly. They were unable to understand what had happened. The man they were to arrest had suddenly melted from sight. They mumbled仲interlarded mutterings to each other. But they were not as astonished as was Professor Mathews. They did not grasp the enormity of what was going on, as he did. It upset his whole mental universe. He sat a while and then paced nervously up and down the vast room. He came and looked at the rope. Then he looked at the canvas sack. The sack lay loose as though the contents had escaped. He felt of it and found that it contained three soft baseball-sized objects. He jumped back and shrank away from it. The time seemed interminable. He waited and waited.

Broader an exasperated interval between the policemen or a short exclamation from Adkins or Beecher, there was no conversation. Beecher watched the rope closely. There was a tense nervous strain created largely by the professor's distracted movements. Then, after what seemed hours, though in reality less than one hour, there were six short tugs on the rope. Adkins threw his switch, and out of the crash and terror Heagey tumbled out on the floor, all tangled up in coils of rope.

He was breathless, haggard, wild-eyed. He lay for a moment on the floor, panting. Then he sprang up and gared fiercely, wildly about. He opened suddenly to perceive where he was. An expression of relief came over his face; he sighed deeply and sank down to a sitting position. He looked exhausted, his clothes were disarranged and ripped in some places, and were covered with dust.

"The five people looked at him in silent amazement. He looked from one to the other of them; it was a long time before he spoke.

"Good to be back here. I can hardly believe I'm really back. Never again for me."

"What about Sheila? Where is she?" the professor demanded.

Hargrave receded as though from some shock. He sank again into profound depression. At first he had seemed a little happy to get back. Apparently Sheila had been forcibly driven out of his mind for the time.

"Let me tell you about it," he began slowly. He seemed not to know just how to proceed. "That is, if I can. I don't even know how to tell it. I know what it must feel like to go insane."

"I heard the switch go down as I gave Adonis the signal. Then it seemed like an elevator starting, and that was all. Until I looked around,

"I was sitting on something that looked like rock or cement. Not far from me was that barrel-like lump of flesh with the two straps around it, just exactly as I had seen it in the laboratory. And then a row of shapes reaching into the dim, blue distance. The nearer ones seemed to be of concrete or cement. You've heard me jive at the crazy, cubistic and futuristic designs on book wrappers and wall-paper. Well, those are pleasant and harmonious compared with the dizzy, pegged angles, the irregular, zig-zag shapes with peaks and shafts, and everything out of sense and reason except perspective. Perspective was still correct. Just a long, straight row fading into the distance. What in the world it could be, I hadn't the faintest idea. However, I gradually recovered it out.

"Naturally, since I am a three-dimensional organism, I can only perceive three dimensions. Even out in hyperspace I can only see three dimensions. What I saw must therefore be the spatial cross-section of some sort of buildings. I couldn't see the entire buildings, but merely the cross-section cut by the particular set of coordinates in which I was. Now it occurs to me, that since that barrel-like thing looked exactly the same to me out there as it did in the room here, I must have been in a 'space' or set of coordinates parallel to the ones we are in now.

"Imagine a two-dimensional being, whose life had been confined to a sheet of paper and who could only perceive in two dimensions, suddenly turned loose in a room. He could only see one place at a time. Everything he saw would be cross-sections of things as we know them. Wouldn't he go crazy?" I nearly did.

"I first started out to walk along beside the row of rock-like shapes. Suddenly near me there appeared two spheres of flesh, just like this one we have here. They rapidly increased in size, coalesced into a barrel-shaped thing with a metal web belt around the middle, and then dissolved quickly, there were there or four smaller globes of stuff and then ten or a dozen little ones, finally an irregular, blotchy, melon-like thing which quickly disappeared. In fifteen seconds it had all materialized and gone.

"I was beginning to understand the stuff now. Merely some inhabitant or creature of hyperspace going by. As he passed through my particular spatial plane, I saw successive cross-sections of him. Just as though my body were passing through a plane, my feet first: first there would be two irregular circles, then a larger oval, the trunk, with two circles, the anus, at the soles and separate from it, and so on until the top of the head vanished as a small spot.

"I followed down the line of buildings, looking around. Bizarre shapes appeared around me, changing size and shape in the wildest, dizziest, most unsavory ways, splitting into a dozen pieces and coming together into large, irregular chunks. Some seemed to be metal or concrete, some human flesh, naked or clothed. In a few minutes my mind became accustomed to interpreting this porcage of fourth-dimensional things through my 'plane' and I studied them with interest. Then I slipped and fell down. Down I whirled for a while, and everything about me disappeared.

"I found myself rolling, and sitting up, I looked around again. There was nothing. I still seemed to be on cement or stone, and in all directions it stretched away endlessly into the distance. It was the most disconcerting thing I had ever seen in my life. I was just a speck in a universe of cement pavement. I began to get panicky, but controlled myself and started to walk, feeling the reassuring pull of the rope behind me. I walked nervously and saw nothing anywhere. Evidently I had slipped off my former 'plane' and gotten into a new one. The rope tightened suddenly, perhaps I had reached the end of it. It jerked me backwards and I swung dizzily, my feet hanging loose.

"I swung among millions of small spherical bodies dispersed irregularly in all directions about me, even below. They moved gently back and forth in small arcs, and there were large brown bodies.—

"Why go through it all? I stumbled from one spatial plane into another. Each seemed a totally different universe. I couldn't get them correlated in my mind into any kind of a consistent whole at all. For a long time I climbed over some huge metal framework, I can't move things that grew larger and disappeared; I struggled through a jungle of some soft, green, vegetable stuff. Just all of a sudden I made up my mind that I'd never find Shasta.

"She might be within a foot of me all the time, yet I couldn't get to her, because I couldn't see out of three dimensions. I yelled her name until I was hoarse and my head throbbed, but nothing happened. I grew panicky and decided I wanted to go back. I pulled on the rope and dragged myself toward the direction from which it came, sometimes I did rapidly toward it, at others I could feel myself dragging my entire weight with my arms. Then I could go no further, pull as I might. It seemed like trying to reach an inch higher

than you really can. I couldn't quite stretch that far. So I gave it six short hugs. Very quietly I tumbled out here. I haven't seen Sheila."

The professor was calm. His face was set hard.

"Either you're telling the truth or you're insane as a loon," he said, and his voice was purpled and vacuous. "Perhaps I'm crazy, too. I'm broad-minded enough to admit that is possible. I've got you charged with murder. But I'll give you a chance. What are you going to do about Sheila?"

Hraggy's eyes blazed.

"You can go to hell with your chance," he roared. "I want Sheila back worse than you do. If anyone can get her back, it is myself. If you interfere, you simply guarantee that she's lost, that's all! If you want to see her again, keep your hands off! See!"

The professor was a better man than he, blustering actions might lead one to think.

"Well, I'm worried," he said shortly. "Can I help you any?"

Hraggy never changed expression.

"Perhaps you can. I may need more money than I've got. Just now you can help me most by getting out of here and taking everybody with you and letting me think. I've got an idea. I'll phone you when I want something."

"Well, remember you're charged with murder, and there will be a police guard around this place."

How great and yet how small men will be under trying conditions!

Hraggy, left alone, sat and thought. He jumped up and ran his hands through his hair.

"Goddam! Think of it!" he gasped. "Sheila out there alone! In that mad place! Not even a rope!"

He paced rapidly around the room. Then he seized paper and pencil and began to draw. He drew circles and ellipsoids of different sizes and laid the drawings in a row. The professor came in an hour later and found him at it.

"How do you ever expect to find her that way?" he growled peevishly.

"Shut up!" Hraggy snapped, his nerves tautened into disrespect. He swept up the papers with his hand and crumpled them into the waste-basket. "No use. Can't study four-dimensional stuff on a two-dimensional plane. Say!" he shouted scowling at the professor, "get me a hundred pounds of modelling clay up here. Quick as you can!"

The professor trotted out after it without a word, much less with any understanding of what it was about.

"Do you think you'll do it?" was his eager attitude one moment, and, "If you don't, you go on trial for murder," he roared a moment later.

Far into the night Hraggy worked with modelling clay, moulding the forms that had appeared in the laboratory and some of those he

had seen in hypnosis. He tried to recollect the order in which the various shapes had appeared to him, and laid them in rows in that order. Late into the night he modeled and arranged and stared and studied. Near midnight the professor poked his head in the door.

"She's really gone," he moaned. "She hasn't come home. She's nowhere!" He turned on the haggard Heagey. "The policemen are on the job so don't try to get away. But I'm offering five thousand dollars to anyone who brings Sheila back."

Heagey matched a few hours' sleep on the floor. In the morning when the professor opened the door, he was arranging clay balls and clubs into rows and staring at them. As soon as the professor's head appeared, he shouted:

"I've got it! The biggest photographs you can get of Sheila. Head and full-length both. And fast! Hurry!"

He now turned his attention to the object in the canvas sack. He unknotted the rope from the fourteen ounce stick, tied the corners of the canvas together, inserted a stout stick (obtained by breaking the leg off a chair), and twisted it, squeezing the small ball of flesh unmercifully. At first sight it was a cruel looking procedure, but there was method in it. The thing began to ping back and forth excitedly. He lowered the bulk of his pressure, but kept up a steady, firm tension. His strength was sufficient to hold it fairly steady. Suddenly he lowered all pressure. The mass of flesh suddenly grew larger and the satisfied expression in Heagey's face showed that was what he was working for. Just as when you push hard against someone and then suddenly let go, he falls toward you.

He persisted steadily along this line. When the cross-section increased in size he held it loosely, patted it gently, and even talked soothingly. As soon as it started to decrease, he screwed up his stick and bore down on it remorselessly. For an hour he wrestled. Then the professor emerged with two 16 by 20 photographs taken out of frames.

"Wait!" shouted Heagey peremptorily. "Stand there and hold 'em." He twisted up his stick again, held it, and burned it; and was rewarded by seeing the barrel-shaped mass appear, then two long, cylindrical bodies beside it, covered with metal-mesh.

"What's your idea?" the professor asked.

"Don't bother me!" Heagey panted irritably. "And don't move. I might need you any minute."

Finally the thing decreased in size again, but this time Heagey seemed satisfied with it. He removed the canvas sack. There was an irregular sphere the size of a bucket. Over its surface were queer patches, glassy places, and iridescent, rainbow-like spots that changed color and looked deep.

"Quick now, the pictures!"

Heagey set up the pictures in front of the thing, as if to show them

to it. The professor stared at him as he would at a silly child. Heagey suddenly hit himself in the side of the head with his fist.

"What a prize fool! I keep on being a fool!" he shouted. He turned vaguely to the professor.

"Get me the two best fellows out of the fine-arts department. Quick! Sculptors!"

If the professor thought Heagey was crazy, nevertheless some glimmer of hope of restoring Sheila beat him willingness and speed of thinking. He walked rapidly into the telephone box a few minutes, repeating the word emergency several times. Then he started down the driveway, taking a padawan with him.

Heagey was feverishly busy. He seemed to be bringing every object in the room that could be conveniently carried, to sit before the unearthly specimen he had there. He seemed to be showing it things. He acted far all the world like some ignorant, superstitious savage, bringing things to his god. Books, chains, tools and cruts, mathematical medals, hammers and wrenches, one thing after another, he held them up in front of it for a while and tossed them aside on the growing heap. When the two sculptors arrived, he barked his directions at them, and continued what seemed his silly efforts to entertain the object in front of him by showing it everything he could find. At least it remained quiet and unshamed.

The sculptors, infected with his determination, worked rapidly. First there was a model of a heavy, bulging man, with his foot caught in a hole like a coal-chute, and held fast by a square lid. Then from the pictures a model of Sheila, considering the speed with which it was made, it was a wonderful thing, with her pointed chin and curly hair all true to life. Then a rough model of Heagey.

Heagey set the models down in front of the iridescent, patchy Thing and played puppets with the models, went through a regular dramatic performance with them. The models of Sheila and himself stood near the man caught in the trap-door. The imprisoned man struggled and knocked Sheila over and she rolled away, she fell down off the surface of the block to a lower level. The imprisoned man continued to struggle, and the model of Heagey searched around, but could not get past the edge of the block.

Then, very impotently looking toward the Thing, as though he really believed it was looking, Heagey made the model of the imprisoned man lean over and pick up Sheila, and laid her over to the model of himself. The model of himself held on to Sheila, and pushed the trap-door that imprisoned the bulging man, who hopped out of the hole and hastened away. That was the little show that Heagey put on with the yard-high clay models.

The patchy sphere changed suddenly. First it shrank and then it

swelled; then there were three or four things moving back and forth. And suddenly there stood Sheba!

Pale and dazed and wan she looked, and she swayed as she looked blankly around. Then her eyes widened and she gave a little scream, but a look of peace and content spread over her features. By the time Heagry was at her side, she fell limply into his arms.

"One moment, dear," he said gently as he laid her down carefully in the arm-chair. The professor was down on the floor beside her in a moment, watching her fluttering eyelids.

"Dad?" she breathed. "I'm all right."

Heagry stepped quickly to his switcher and threw the big one in and out again. Again came the crash cut short, and the sensation of movement. And the Thing was gone. There was nothing left of it at all.

"Did you let the Thing go?" the professor reproved querulously.

"I had to," Heagry snapped. "It was a promise—for finding Sheba." The professor was sitting on the floor, writing a check.

"Do you think you deserve that?" he said testily. He was merely trying to hide his emotion. "You won't get it until you prove it. Explain how you did this!"

Heagry dropped into a chair, looking exhausted to the limit.

"I reasoned from the things I saw Out There that this creature must be intelligent. There were buildings, machines, and leather and metal-writhing. So I made models and tried to deduce its shape. Somewhere on it there must be a head and eyes. You saw how I cutted it 'through' this 'space' of ours until the head was cut by our 'space' and the eyes could see us. Then I told it what I wanted it to do with models—just as I would explain things to you by means of drawings on a sheet of paper."

"How do you believe there are four dimensions?" Heagry demanded by way of vengeance.

"This. Do you?" the professor countered.

"You? I'm convinced there are a dozen or a thousand dimensions!"

to it. The professor stared at him as he would at a silly child. Heagey suddenly hit himself to the side of the head with his fist.

"What a pizze fool! I keep on being a fool!" he shouted. He turned sullenly to the professor.

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to fit the magical window into his only room that it remained to Mr. Shaddan's mind that he did not want a window. And then they were at the door of the house in which he rented a room, and it seemed too late to explain.

The stranger in masked privacy while he fitted up the window—Mr. Shaddan ventured outside the door at the top of a little flight of creaky stairs. He heard no sound of hammering.

And presently the strange old man came out with his faded yellow robe and his great beard, and his eyes on far off places. "It is finished," he said, and he and the young man parted. And whether he remained a spot of colour and melancholy in London, or whether his eyes were again to brighten and what dark bands kept on the circulation of his twenty-five muscles, Mr. Shaddan never knew.

Mr. Shaddan entered the bare-boarded room in which he slept and spent all his Indian hours between closing-time and the hour at which Messrs. Morgan and Carter commenced. In the Potates of so cheery a room his new frock-coat must have been a continual wonder. Mr. Shaddan took it off and folded it carefully, and there was the old man's window rather high up in the wall. There had been no window in that wall hitherto, nor any ornament at all but a small cupboard, in which Mr. Shaddan had put his frock-coat safely away he glanced through his new window. It was where his cupboard had been in which he kept his tea-things, they were all standing on the table now. When Mr. Shaddan glanced through his new window it was late in a summer's evening, the butterflies some while ago would have closed their wings, though the bats would scarcely yet be drifting abroad—but this was in London: the shops were shut and street-lamps not yet lighted.

Mr. Shaddan rubbed his eyes, then rubbed the window, and still he saw a sky of blazing like, and far, far down beneath him, so that no sound came up from it or smoke of chimneys, a mediæval city set with towers. Brown roofs and cobble streets, and then white walls and battlements, and beyond them bright green fields and tiny streams. On the towers archers killed, and along the walls were pike-men, and now and then a wagon went down some old-world street and lumbered through the gateway and out to the country, and now and then a wagon drew up in the city from the mist that was rolling with evening over the fields. Sometimes folk put their heads out of lattice windows sometimes song-silly troubadours seemed to sing, and nobody hurried or troubled about anything. Any and every through the distance was, for Mr. Shaddan seemed higher above the city than any cathedral spire, yet one clear detail he obtained as a thin the banners flapping from every tower over the idle archers had little golden dragons all over a pure white field.

He heard motor-buses roar by his other window, he heard the newsboys howling.

Mr. Shadden grew drearier than ever after that on the premises in the establishment of Messrs. Mengin and Chater. But in one matter he was wise and watchful: he made continuous and careful inquiries about golden dragons on a white flag, and talked to no one of his wonderful window. He came to know the flags of every king in Europe, he even dabbled in history, he made inquiries at shops that understood heraldry, but nowhere could he learn any trace of little dragons or on a field argent. And when it seemed that for him alone these golden dragons had fluttered he came to love them as an exile in some desert might love the likes of his home or as a sick man might love swallows which he cannot easily live to another spring.

As soon as Messrs. Mengin and Chater closed, Mr. Shadden used to go back to his dray room and gaze through the wonderful window until it grew dark in the city and the guard would go with a lantern round the ramparts and the night came up like velvet, full of strange stars. Another clue he tried to obtain one night by putting down the shapes of the constellations, but this led him no further, for they were unlike any that shone upon other hemisphere.

Each day as soon as he woke he went first to the wonderful window, and there was the city, dimmative in the distance, all shining in the morning, and the golden dragons dancing in the sun, and the archers stretching themselves or swinging their arms on the tops of the windy towers. The window would not open, so that he never heard the songs that the troubadours sang down there beneath gilded balconies; he did not even hear the belles' chimes, though he saw the jackdaws unlit every hour from their homes. And the last thing that he always did was to cast his eye round all the little towers that rose up from the ramparts to see that the little golden dragons were flying there on their flags. And when he saw them flouting themselves in white folds from every tower against the marvelous deep blue of the sky he clasped contentedly and, taking one last look, went off to his work with a glory in his mind. It would have been difficult for the customers of Messrs. Mengin and Chater to guess the precise ambition of Mr. Shadden as he walked before them in his coat frock and, it was that he might be a man-at-arms or an archer in order to fight for the little golden dragons that flew on a white flag for an unknown king in an inaccessible city. At first Mr. Shadden used to walk round and round the mean street that he lived in, but he gained no clue from that, and soon he noticed that quite different winds blew below his wonderful window from those that blew on the other side of the house.

In August the evenings began to grow shorter, this was the very remark that the other employees made to him at the emporium, so that he almost feared that they suspected his secret, and he had much less time for the wonderful window, the lights were few down there and they blinked out early.

One morning late in August, just before he went to Busness, Mr. Shadlen saw a company of pikemen running down the cobbled road towards the gateway of the mediæval city—Golden Dragon City he used to call it alone in his own mind, but he never spoke of it to anyone. The next thing that he noticed was that the archers on the towers were talking a poor dead together and were handling round bundles of arrows in addition to the quivers which they wore. Heads were thrust out of windows more than usual, a woman ran out and called some children indoors, a knight rode down the street, and then some pikemen appeared along the walls, and all the pickdaws were in the air. In the street no troubadour sang. Mr. Shadlen took one look along the towers to see that the flags were flying, and all the golden dragons were streaming in the wind. Then he had to go to Busness. He took a bus back that evening and ran upstairs. Nothing seemed to be happening in Golden Dragon City except a crowd in the cobbled street that led down to the gateway, the archers seemed to be reclining as usual lucidly in those towers, then a white flag went down with all its golden dragons, he did not see at first that all the archers were dead. The crowd was pouring towards him, towards the precipitous wall from which he looked, men with a white flag covered with golden dragons were moving backwards slowly, men with another flag were pressing them, a flag on which there was one huge red bear. Another banner went down upon a tower. Then he saw it all, the golden dragons were being beaten—his little golden dragons. The men of the bear were coming under the window, whatever he threw from that height would fall with terrific force: fire-balls, coal, his clock, whatever he had he would fight for his little golden dragons yet. A flame broke out from one of the towers and licked the feet of a reclining archer, he did not stir. And now the alibi shranked was out of sight directly underneath. Mr. Shadlen broke the panes of the wonderful window and wrenched away with a poker the lead that held them. Just as the glass broke he saw a banner covered with golden dragons fluttering still, and then as he drew back to hurl the poker there came to him the scent of mysterious spices, and there was nothing there, not even the daylight, for behind the fragments of the wonderful window was nothing but that small cupboard in which he kept his tea-things.

And though Mr. Shadlen is older now and knows more of the world, and even has a Busness of his own, he has never been able to buy such another window, and has not ever since, either from books or men heard any rumour at all of Golden Dragon City.

Tiger Dust

by Bennett Morgan

Bennett Morgan's best known story is the remarkable "Larsons," a tale of a red reporter, of a hunting wild with crocodiles and of a Chinaman who traded his human soul for that of the deep sea beast. "Larsons" has been made available in other collections, but Bennett Morgan's output was not restricted to that clever alone. "Tiger Dust" is complete with the same tropical Asia background, with fishing for the ways of jungle-dwelling people, and with the poetry of the oriental magic that can transform a tiger from a beast to a thing of sacred. The story of a Malayan with a vengeance is a fantastic classic reminiscent of *Dracula* and *Moby-Dick*, a tropical take.

WITH an order for Paradise birds to be shipped to a private collector, Dureen decided to see if any could be bought from Omer Sung Loo, a native dealer whose unscrupulous trickery had made all dealers wary of him and caused the captains of cargo boats to refuse to carry his trapped animals and birds. Dureen had been cheated by Omer Sung Loo in his early days of collecting but he had cut his eye teeth in the game and wiped off his score against the native dealer. He was on his guard, and with him went his chief trapper and right-hand man, Tom Bourke, big, devil-may-care Irishman, equally at home with the natives and white men in their gathering-places of Malaya.

Over a drink before they started, Bourke unburdened the fact that he had taken a native wife.

"Pathetic a man that might any day set his foot on the tail of a king cobra has no business to marry a nice white gal," he said. "Should I meet up with a hungry tiger, my fate wouldn't be good for her to contemplate. But native women understand their country an' its peculiar accidents. What's more, they have ways of avengin' a man just as white widowers have avocated insurance claims. There's a saying that where nature grants a person the antidote is near by. Maybe 'tis true. But anyway I paid dear for a little golden native woman from the temple. She dances finely, an' she knows native magic. I hope you'll feel free to visit our bungalow any time, sir."

Time came when Dureen wished to God he had not bothered with the order for Paradise birds or met Bourke's native wife.

The cages in Omar Sun Loo's kampung were small and badly kept. The huddled prisoners drooped in默默的 sun heat. Omar Sung Loo was a mongrel of bad ancestry despised by Malays and Chinese alike, and as Dianen staled his business by honest dealings, Omar Sung Loo went in for side show freaks. There was a two-headed caiman calf, an elephant with forty pairs of eighteen-toed feet held for a high price from pahangs who considered them lucky, and in a cage two cobras joined for three-quarters of their length. Ronke spat with disgust as he looked at them.

"Freaks should be killed," he mutinied. "But Dianen, demand if these cobras look as if they was born that way! Look at the protracted war between them."

Omar Sung Loo led them to a shallow pool where a small monkey lay along the sloping bank, its lower extremity in the water. Dianen could as he gazed; instead of legs the tail of a fish was joined to its legs! Agony burned in its eyes. It watched as a German Omar offered and a Chinese attendant forced a tablet down its throat, which seemed to relieve its pain. It would not live long, but Omar Sung Loo tried hard to make Dianen buy it while it lived.

Orchard comic shops are full of immortal monkey bodies joined to dried fish-tails, the "survival" of commerce, but Dianen realized some hellishly ingenuous master says on his reply this revolving living experiment. Ronke's arms were laid. His hand went to his pistol and the scorching sunlight shone on a small black revolver in his hand.

"Fin of two minds whether to shoot you or the monkey," he said to Omar Sung Loo, who backed away from the hellgreen brigand and mouthed out an order. The Chinese darted to a cage and bawled a warning. From the open cage door swung the head of a tiger.

Omar was running to the house and the two white men followed. Dianen knew that trick of Omar's to frighten visitors by the peril of a tiger on the loose and gouge eyesight from them. But this time the Chinese was having trouble pinning the cage door on the tiger's neck to force him back into the cage. The beast had a foreleg outside the bars. They heard the woodenJosh splinter and the tiger leaped down, letting out runs of defiance. The Chinese fled for cover and Omar curred as the tiger cleared the kampung fence at one bound.

Shouts of frightened villagers strolled through the heated silence, but Omar snarled commands and the coolies opened the kampung gates and whacked the tiger cage across the opening. Then Omar took a small sack from his turban folds and loosed the peacock string.

In the sun-blazed emptiness of the village road stalked the royal beast, staring at intervals. A native coming down the road unaware of peril saw it and ran up the damping fence in an incredible burst of agility and dived over. Ronke shrieked. But Omar went into the road and tossed a little powder from the perch in his hand. The tiger

crouched with lashing tail, ready to spring, took a crawling step forward and sniffed the white powder. Instead of leaping, it began to lick the dust. Omar dashed a line of white powder to the cage and the beast lapped and purred, rolling as it went along licking the powder to a few grains on the floor of the cage. The cage door was jammed shut, with a contented, purring tiger inside.

With a malignant snarl Omar turned to the two white men.

"My lord knows his master," he said.

"Will you sell me some of that powder?" asked Dineen.

"No, Tom, it is my great secret," said Omar, drawing up the pouch string. An instant later Bourke's hand darted, snatched the pouch, and with his gun covering Omar's breast he judged Dineen to go and backed out of the place with the curses and threats of Omar Sung Loo shrieked after them.

"Curse don't worry me none," said Bourke. "But he's said 'em o' a tattoo to blast my body now an' my soul hereafter."

No native showed a face to them in that otherwise friendly village as they plodded the hot road back to Siamabaya after a fruitless search for birds and with trouble hot on their heels for the theft of the tiger dust.

"I'll go get ye some birds," said Bourke. "It'd be as well for me to get naked anyway. Omar is lower than a cobra, but he's clever an' he's in with the worst kinds of undiluted Asiatic hellhounds this side o' Shool. Dineen, some o' his Chinese surgeons joined them two cobras, were as I live! I've heard o' graftin' fins on fish, but that monkey business makes a man sick inside. He's got smart surgeons on his staff, an' no laws o' God or man, heaven or hell to keep him in bounds. I'll give that tiger dust to my wife, who believes tigers have souls. She even says humans can change into tigers, an'----" Bourke launched into stories of weird tigers that lasted until they were back at the hotel, bathed and sipping cool drinks.

Next day Bourke departed for the interior after Paradise birds, and Dineen waited. No word came for months and he grew worried and decided to call on Bourke's native wife in a village of the interior. He came after the heat of the day to a pretty bungalow covered with white-silked bougainvillea, and coming up the path heard the soft notes of a native bell-gong and the croon of a love song which ceased as he drew near. Bourke's wife came to the porch clad in a silk sari, her dark hair in a coil over one ear, a red flower over the other.

She was dainty and pretty, but her dark eyes held the enigmatic look of coquetry arrested in full flush by tragedy. He had brought her a string of small seed pearls as a wedding gift, but dropping them into her hand made him feel as awkward as if he gave red-heeled slippers to a man. She spoke poor English and he asked if she had heard from Bourke.

Dineen came from that interview with a chill in spite of the tropic heat. Undoubtedly Bourke's wife was icy. Her passion for Bourke was apparent, her loyalty intense. She talked querly, cautiously, but she said evil had befallen her man. She had heard him calling in agony yet warning her not to try to reach him. He was not dead, yet devils persecuted him. He loved her, yet their life together was ended. He commanded her not to avenge him as love might prompt. Dineen realized that she accepted her loss with some plausibility but she was wishing to learn the mystery regarding Bourke and brooding vengeance in spite of his warning.

Dineen decided to search for his chief trapper, and Bourke's wife sent him a relative of her family named Isham who knew Bourke and was loyal to his wife. Isham gathered native canoes and supplies for the trip, one item of which surprised Dineen, a supply of thick long excoffes. Dineen remanded Isham that they had flashlights, but the natives said Bourke always carried "corpse candles," which in case of his death were to be lighted around his body. Bourke's wife added her gift for good luck, a treasured crucifix of Bourke's, finely carved of ebony and very wrapped in a length of silk, which Dineen placed in the box containing the "corpse-candles" and some canned and bottled delicacies for his own personal use.

Native canoes took them up shoreless rivers where mangrove pods ripen on branches and thop roots in famous wells bedded in the earth. Crocodiles rested their upturned jaws on the rocks, and small vixens, birds flew in and out taking food particles from their fangs. The country swarmed with small monkeys that scattered when a big orang utang would come along and peer curiously at the canoes. Dineen noted his natives were noisy from the start, and these items affected him. But there were compensations for the discomforts of insects and leeches and guardng against the swinging tails of crocodiles. The mountain peaks were mist-wreathed, the wooded jungles held orchids like tinted flames. Birds of Paradise dangled on upper tree branches at sunrise. There were flocks of gaudy parrots and butterflies like unblown bits of gay silk.

They found a blazed trail where Bourke had cut his way inland. But the irritating thing to Dineen was the constant trubering toll and stuttering of native drums talking bark and forth.

Isham, who understood the drum gossip was worried. The other natives wanted to turn back, but there is a penalty for deserting a white man in the jungle, also, Isham held over them the fear of vengeance from Bourke's wife, who had a definite reputation as a sorceress.

Leaving the canoes, they went through saw-edged jungle grave, plagued by leeches and stinging insects. Around the evening campfire the men picked off leeches and polished their plates, which are

charms against evil. The villagers met with were friendly and they remembered Bombo going through, but refused to furnish guides. "There are devils-devils," they said.

Inbam translated, but Dineen did not mind. There was a tangible apprehension in his own mind, a feeling of weird things going forward in the jungle. He decided that a rest from the laborious travelling and a little hunting might cheer the men. Birds were plentiful. So at the foot of a hill range standing like the vertebrae of a monster that had fossilized as it crawled seaward, they made camp.

Dineen's personal supplies were kept in a hut they built on high stilts. He was sitting in the doorway one sunburn when he saw a huge orang-outang standing in the crook of a near-by tree holding the branches apart and peering down. Inbam also saw it and silently handed up a gun to Dineen's hand. Instantly the branches crashed together, the ape fled, and the swish of other branches springing back as it leaped from one to another told of its size and weight.

That night the native drums were louder. Inbam went to the nearest village and returned late with a tale that kept Dineen awake longer than usual. He said a native girl had been carried into the jungle by one of the orang-outangs. The villagers were mourning her loss and talking about terrible magic in the hills. Inbam's own tale was interrupted as he ceased speaking and pointed toward the tree, and in the moonlight Dineen saw again an orang-outang with its tangs bared as if it grinned. There came a bellow from that hairy throat which sent the men lying around the small campfire scuttling toward the hut, their curved knives ready for defense.

The big ape stood on a branch balanced by its hand-grip on a higher limb and from its black lips came sounds so uncouth that Dineen felt the hair prickling on the nape of his neck. He could have sworn he heard the creature mutter words:

"By. Tawn, by . . ." which means "It is true, True."

A silence bred of fear held Dineen until Shrewdly and laboriously the great ape mouthed sounds like Malay words. The natives huddled together, whispering in terror. At Dineen's ear Inbam breathed:

"He says 'orang jatuh abot.' Tawn. He wants white man speak me. What devil is it that gives speech to a man of the woods, Tawn?"

"That is foolish talk," said Dineen stubbornly. "Your wits wonder. Get the express rifle." But at sight of Dineen with the elephant gun in his hand, the ape disappeared.

Below the hut the natives were chattering in frenzied outbursts and Dineen knew they were ready to bolt.

"It is an ape that somebody has trained and taught to speak," he said, knowing it was folly to contradict their belief that the creature had used their own speech. He did not yet believe it, and his men needed to be handled carefully lest they desert him now.

That night the drunk spoke in priding spirits and talked with boasting sometimes into violent thrashing, and his arm lay awake whispering. At dawn they planned to leave this evil place. Dureen was one white man among a crowd of savages almost unmentionable from superstitious fear. He started them placing birdlime on sticks to lodge in the trees and building cages on tall poles beyond the reach of snakes, then he led them into the jungle to hunt.

That night in camp, while supper was cooking, he set clearing oil-lanterns that had punctured his putters and lacerated boots, and devoured to open canned peaches for a treat. He pulled the box with his clothing from under the camp bed and groped for the other case. Then Dureen cursed. The case of purchases canned food was gone, and with it the candles and crucifix packed among the bottles. He did not suspect a thief among his own men, yet around the hut lay his shaving tackle, weapons and ammunition, far more appealing to a native than the village, left undisturbed. He searched further, then called Ihaban, who had discovered that a sack of rice was missing also. The sack had been punctured and rice had trickled from the hole as it was carried away.

At dawn they saw birds alighting to feed on the rice. Dureen marked their swooping flight toward a shadowy crevasse in the hills.

"We'll follow the thief," he announced.

With a few picked men and Ihaban he started across the valley and camped near the hills that night. He was awakened from sleep beside the campfire by a sound that lifted his hair. The light of dying embers showed his men crowding in creeping toward him. From the caves of gloom beyond the dim fire glow came a hoarse voice like a man's tone played on the last notes of an ancient organ. No human throat could have equalled its enabling sonority. Ihaban took off Dureen's arm and his teeth shattered as he whispered,

"Thus, the man of the woods sang, a rustling-song that I have sung to women. It is a devil!"

"I've heard that damned ditty," agreed Dureen. Yet fear clawed at his brain. Cold sweat broke from his pores. "It's that talking ape," he added.

"Yes, Tom. He is singing to the native girl he stole from the village," said Ihaban.

There was a restless rustling of tree branches that told of more than one great ape in the vicinity. To Dureen's increasing horror there came a gristy burst of profanity in a voice as mighty as that of the singer:

"Sing up ye damned brutes. Quit yer singin' love songs to what the Chinks. I make o' that poor little native girl that ye stole an' dropped in their keepin'. God! I could kill ye for doing that if it wouldn't be so hellish lonesome without yer bad company in my own misery."

The speech ended with a volley of oaths that should have blasted their victim, then came the reply in poor English from the voice that had sung the pantomime.

"Be not angry with thy servant, Tuan. Long have I followed you into the perils of trapping beasts and birds. Now I am trapped with you. Yet perhaps it was so written. Strange magic I have seen, yet never did I think to be caught by it. The spirit of my first master entered into the body of a tigress. Now my spirit has entered into the body of a man of the woods."

A yell ended the ventriloquial ravings. Deneen pushed his own firearms until it hurt crowning himself that he was not dreaming. The crashing of tree branches roused the jungle panther.

There was no more sleep for Deneen. At daybreak he led his men toward the purple gap in the hills and again escaped at the edge of flat country bordering another crocodile-infested river. Leaving the men and supplies, Deneen and Isham went forward, picking their way through masses of creepers and rotting deadwood to the gloom of mangroves bordering the water. From one twisted root to another they stepped cautiously. The maggots slipped into the water and sank slowly, then rehinkling eyes staring upward, bubbles breaking where they sank. The stench of rotting vegetation and nauseating crocodiles' calm was thick and heavy. Then as Deneen perched up and down the dark stream he caught sight of a wild modern powerboat on the opposite side moored to a tree. From where it lay, a trail had been trashed into the barrier jungle.

Small monkeys chattered and barked with sudden cries, a sign that orang-outangs were coming. At the sound of distant branches swishing Deneen turned to retrace his way to solid ground. Isham was younger and more agile and he left Deneen behind. Creepers cut off Deneen's sight of the native when suddenly a great ape dropped and confronted the white man.

In stand erect, brawdly huge and panting, Deneen tried to shoot, but as he raised the gun to his shoulder it was wrenched from his grasp by a second orang-outang which hung by its paws from an overhead tree branch. The blood seared to anagel in his flesh as the big ape curse roared, mauling unearthly sounds that even in his terror Deneen could not refuse to understand.

"Deneen, ye don't know me," it said monotonously. "Ye don't know Roarke, an' I don't blame ye. Ye wouldn't believe it's me in this awful shape. But it's true. Deneen. It's Roarke's brain in the head of an ape. That's what the Chinks did to me. Ober Sung Lee's Chunk surgeon played their hellish tricks on me an' my trapper, just because I stole that tiger dust o' his. God! what a price for a man to pay."

Deneen felt his senses whirling, his legs wobbling. The stench of the crocodile swamp filled his throat and nostrils and vertigo clamped

its claws in his vitals. He tried to leap to the next tree-root and his legs were paralyzed like a man in a nightmare trying to escape from demons. He stumbled and fell across a mangrove root with his legs in the stinking ooze.

The giant ape came nearer, a paw reached for him. He was lifted close to that terrible face. Then he knew nothing more until his eyes opened on a leafy canopy of cool shade and cleaner wind. It was some minutes before he saw the great apes crouching near him and realized that he lay on a platform of bamboo crudely lashed to branches high in the trees, which swayed gently as the apes moved and shifted their weight.

"Dineen," came the rasping and thick sounds from a tongue that was slowly accustoming itself to human speech. "It's Bourke talkin'. God! I don't blame ye for doubtin' what I say. But listen to what I'm sayin' an' try to understand. Here, take a swig o' this coconut milk." He whinged a nut on the tree branch and broke the shell.

Dineen's throat was parched and he drank eagerly, then as his head lifted he dropped it again on his arm, hoping to God he discerned the right before him. Yet the voice went on relentlessly.

"Dineen, I'm a sight to scare a man, I know, but listen. Otar Sang Loo's Chink orangs have a kaupong near here an' a nice little tangry. Tabak—that's my trapper as was, though he's an ape now same as I am—well we walked into it unarm'd as babies. The Chinks was polite and give us food an' drinks. They was both doped, Dineen. An' them devils batchured us an' put our livers into the heads of orang-outangs. They meant to ship us to Otar an' sell us as freaks, but we broke away. Otar owed me a grudge, an' you remember how he caused me. He said he'd pay back, an' he did."

It took time for the slow and labored utterance to be voiced. Dineen listened helplessly, and something in that awful wall penetrated past fear, which was his only sensation.

"Ye can't believe," mourned the ape, "but I'll show ye presently how true it is. My wife knows. I went there an' told her I was in a devil land an' could never come home to her again. I told her not to search for me. But I said if Otar Sang Loo came tiger trapping in the jungles she might slip the word to the natives to let a tiger maul him to death. Tis a poor revenge but 'twill keep him from further hellishness. An' Dineen, I want your help now. My man, Tabak—the unbaptized son of a slut—stole a native girl an' bounded her down to the kaupong for this Chink surgeon to make him a sweetheart orang-outang. We stole her before the head wound healed, an' she's here on our tree-nest dyin' by inches. You've some skill with wounds, Dineen. Look at her an' see can ye do anything. I'd end it for her, only it's so damned lonesome, an' Tabak an' me would fight.

Somehow I want to live to know Omar is dead first . . . if I can stand it that long."

Dineen lay shuddering, hearing but not heeding. The great ape lifted him with his back against the tree bough and pointed toward a female ape that sat slumped in a heap at native women sit, its body leaning forward between its upthrust knees. Around its head was a pink peacocked star like the edge of a cap. One look at the star revealed to Dineen the badly infected state. His dread-filled eyes gazed at the other apes and saw the leveled scars around their heads. A burst of insane laughter came from his lips.

"It's tough on ye, Dineen, but you're safe with us, if that's any comfort. Tell me about the ape-girl."

"That would need surgical attention and disinfectants," he muttered hoarsely.

"We got none. But there's plenty in the Chink's kinspong. You know drugs better'n I do. I'll take ye along."

"I won't go!" Dineen protested, but his resistance was feeble. The big ape was ruthless. Dineen saw that the ape body and instincts were not wholly controlled by the human brain, and Banks had been a bold hunter, cruel enough when his work demanded. Dineen was being over his shoulder like a sack, carried in swinging flight that swooped from branch to tree. To save the lashing of branches on his face he ducked his head against the hairy breast and shut his eyes. Presently he must awaken from this devil dream . . .

There was a glimpse of dark water as the apes leaped and caught branches on the opposite shore, then he saw sun gleams on a bamboo palisade and thatched buildings like large huts. From high in the trees Dineen looked down and saw humans. His first thought was of escape.

Gathering all his strength in a desperate effort he leaped suddenly against the ape's grasp. Then he was falling, shivering through thick-foliated branches, dropping to the ground inside the stockade. He heard the bellow of the apes and gun-shots crackling. Opening his eyes later he saw a Chinese walking beside him as cyclones carried him to the hut. He also saw three young outcasts chained to trees in the kinspong, leaping the length of their fetters, yelling horribly. The Chinese bashed at them with a whip in his hand, and they uttered whisperings. A fourth ape slumped between its knees like the she-ape in the tree cyme. Their heads were swathed in bandages, their four paws manacled.

Dineen was glad to be on a cot on the hot porch behind mosquito netting and drink what was handed him. The Chinese spoke excellent English, but as Dineen crossed the asphaltase through which he was enduring so dreadfully, there came further honor.

"It is neither fever nor a dream," said the Chinese. "Those apes have human brains. We experimented long ago in that branch of

surgery. My countrymen were adepts at grafting when your Western colleagues were being built. Recently we have studied your work and gone ahead tremendously. Animals furnish our greatest field of experimentation. You have seen some poor specimens in the cages at Oscar Sung Lee's Jampung. He has a market for side-show freaks. We hope he will be able to sell the talking apes which we have successfully produced. It has been possible for us to transplant human brains into the skulls of orang-outangs and have them survive. But unfortunately our greatest prize, a man of your race, escaped with a Malay specimen. They brought me a native girl who was operated upon, but stole her before her wound healed. She may not survive, for such operations need care in treatment. Those monkeys you see in the Jampung speak no English and will not be so valuable for exhibition purposes in European countries. So you see how grateful I am that Rourke, the man ape who captured you, dropped you here. I hope you will enjoy our hospitality until we can trap another orang-outang."

The visitor incense of the Chinese's words was some time penetrating Dineen's mind. He was given highly spiced curry and cool drinks, which he ate and drank gratefully. Then he slept and awakened behind the mosquito netting of the cot in a contented lethargy only disturbed by the clinking chains and hoarse cries of the ape prisoners.

A cousin led him to a bath house and handed him fresh pajamas, comforting and cool to his flesh. He was enjoying the rest, the well-seasoned food and drinks. His body and brain were still too exhausted to anticipate danger or offend heavily against it. Except for the chained apes, the place was quiet and deserted; yet the jungle seemed noisier than usual by day, beyond the bamboo fence.

He rose and strolled toward the fence, but two natives appeared armed with ugly looking knives and herded him ignorantly back to the porch, where one stood guard while the other summoned the Chinese surgeon.

Courteous of speech yet blithely cruel, the surgeon adored Dineen more fully of the former awaiting him.

"You must not leave the house."

Anger of the white man toward the Oriental stoicism roused Dineen's rage.

"I'll go where I damn please," he cried. "And you'll stop me at your peril. My men are not far away, remember."

"They cannot enter here," said the Chinese. "Nor are you free to leave, Dineen. I could not part with an fortunate a guest for the experiment I have in view, your own intelligent, trained and educated brain. I lost Rourke, but I shall not risk losing you. Better have another drink, Mr. Dineen, to quiet your nerves."

"Not another drop," shouted Dineen. "I believe you doped my drinks."

"Of course, both your food and drink were doped, as you call it. But is it not better to meet fate which even the bravest men put off as long as he can, the translation from one existence to another form of life? Think it over. I must attend to that suffering ape in the kampong."

Slowly, frightfully, the ghastly truth dawned in his mind. He sat in a hell of chaotic and frenzied fear, and when the drink was brough he struck it from the man's hand. He was unarmed, helpless, even his clothes were gone, except the cotton pajamas in which he sat. His body shuddered as he realized the French surgeon fully intended to make an ape of him! Chattering fear took him down the steps to where the Chinese beat over the chained ape, but two Malays dragged his steps and stood beside him as he began to plead against the fate in store for him.

The end came suddenly. From the trees dropped a cyclonic fury of lightning apes, bellowing their rage, knocking the Malays aside, seizing them by the feet and swinging their heads against the palms, breaking their skulls like egg-shells. Dureen turned from the sight of the surgeon being torn to shreds. Then he was caught over the shoulder of an ape and swung to the trees, the guttural Malay of Tabuk in his ears. The ape-man Hanke was gathering up the surgical instruments, bottles of anaesthetic and rolls of gauze.

A hell of noise, shrieking, murring, screaming, rang in Dureen's ears until he was carried to the tree platform. The height above ground made him crutch low beside the she-ape which lay limp on its side. When the case of instruments and drugs was thumped down beside him Dureen touched the she-ape's body. He sat back on his heels and shook his head.

"She is dyed," he said.

In the swaying aerial perch he felt numbled after the fright in his mind and dim of the light. He watched dully as the ape-men packed up the dead orang-outang and lowered her body in the thicket of leaves below, while they vanished. He was alone in the tree as night fell and the powders of darkness began their mysterious readings, the insect click and chime arose. He slept and wakened as the Scorpion crawled down the sky and the Southern Cross was dimmed by dawnlight.

He shrank from an attempt to descend, but thirst tortured so badly that summing up his courage he swung from the platform to the nearest branch, and working his way by the tree croches he reached the protruding root-knees and got to solid ground. He drank from moisture of night dew cupped in leaves, and followed a well-defined trail to higher ground. His men had fled, leaving the cold ashes of a campfire to mark the place where they had been. All day he traveled, following their trail, and at dark he saw small lights flickering against

a hill. With a fresh burst of speed he hurried on, then halted. Against the sky flames he saw the grotesque figures of the two ape-men.

He would not risk being their prisoner again, and he circled cautiously along a hill slope to a rock from which he could look down. And the fear and repulsion of the miniature beasts left him as he gazed upon their work. There was a hole scooped from the earth, and in it lay the body of the she-ape with the ivory and ebony crucifix stolen from his camp hut, on her breast. Around the grave stood his stolen candles, their flames wavering in the soft night breeze. Beside the grave the ape-man Tabak sat crooning that Malay partum, the love song issued in the night. Dineen remembered that it was the same song he had heard Bourke's native wife singing to the accompaniment of bell-gongs as he went up the path to her bungalow. The voice of Banke, mournfully unaware of its volume, came to him sorrowfully:

"Corpse-candles don't mean much to her, Tabak, but maybe it'll help her soul find its way home. God help me! I wonder if this purgatory I'm going through will be enough for me to find heaven."

The cool night breeze was clearing Dineen's head of the thoughts he had inhabited in the bungalow boud. He visualized all that had happened, and even believed it now. Yet exhaustion forced him to lie and sleep on the sticky hill. The leeches which had bled him freely by day dropped from his flesh at night. A feeling of fatalism dulled further fear. He was more than sleep by a touch on his arm, and the sight of the ape-signalling as it hung was no longer frightening.

"Dineen, I'll be takin' ye to yer camp. Go out with your men. There's nothing you've got to do for me except kill me, and as maybe you'd see my wife an tell her to go back to her people an forget me. There's nothing for her to forget. We're as happy while it last'd."

Dineen was carried swiftly out carrying what he had dropped on the opening of the hill and set the valley, high enough to look down on his own camp.

"Put him there, Tabak," said the other ape who carried the gun that had been snatched from Dineen when he met them at the gate. "Dineen, when we got me say a prayer for the soul of Tom Banke. He's had hell enough alive. There can't be worse hell when he's gone." The rumbling voice held tragic sorrow and despair.

Dineen plunged down the trail. The sound of a shot started him and he looked back. On the rock ledge one ape writhed in death agony a moment, then flung its body fell from the ledge. Dineen heard it crash in the bushes.

Then the other ape squatted and buried the gun between its feet and placed the muzzle between its open jaws. Its hand reached down the gun-barrel to find the trigger. There was a second report. An instant more of hair-covered body slumped from sight. Dineen ran on.

Exhausted, speechless, Dineen came to his camp bleeding from knuckles, his feet cut and gashed, his face gray and grim. He gave the command to go out and fell into Isham's arms. They carried him in a hammock to the dark river and canoe. Repentant over deserting him, Isham made that trip comfortable and brought him to the house of Bourke's native wife.

For days he lay, nursed by native women, drinking the bitter herb tea that combats fever, his body massaged with scented ointments, his appetite tempted with delicacies. Bourke's wife asked no questions but Isham called daily and talked with her for hours. Dineen knew that she heard from Isham what had happened in the jungle.

Her house was cool and pleasant, and in turn she tried to amuse Dineen with her dances, her body sheathed in glittering metal cloth woven with little mirrors. She crooned songs and tapped the soft-voiced bells, and one night she began the fine chant he had heard roared from the voice of an ape-man in the jungle. Dineen started up from his couch protesting.

"Not that song," he cried again.

"No," she asked, her hands still stroking chains from the bell-gong. "It is the song I sang to my man in the night, Tum. A song he loved. And it is time I sing again what must be done."

"What must you do?" he asked.

"Tum, the injury that tortured him must die. Isham has told me much, and you suffered much in the fever which tortured you. Omo Sung Loo shall not continue his evil magic and fill the jungle with fear! Her small body seemed to grow in height and dignity. Her soft eyes were black fire.

Dineen protested very little. No white man can argue a native from a blood feud, and Dineen had no pity for Omo Sung Loo or the surgeons who provided his engine with artificial teeth.

With a crash of her hands on the bell-gong, Bourke's wife ran to her room and returned wrapped in a black shawl. She went from the house and did not return until just before dawn. She slept that day like a woman drugged, but the servants looked after Dineen. That night as they sat cross-legged at the tiny low table, she ate little, and again as the moon rose she went from the house. It was two days before she returned. Dineen was wakened by a sound and saw her swaying as she made her way through the house to her room.

Then for several days she stayed in the house and seemed to regain spirits that had been exhausted on those nights she was away. A week passed, and one day she said to Dineen,

"Tum, word has been carried to Omo Sung Loo that there is good tiger-hunting near here. He is coming to trap them. But you must not leave the house while he is near."

A weird chill touched Dineen's flesh. It was evening, with a red

moon like an old drowsy rose rising behind the hills and tuning silver.
The hot thick scut of flowers weighted the wind.

"I would like to see a tiger trap him," said Dineen.

"Yes, Tsoi"—her voice held a quivering substance of satisfaction like the purring of a cat—"but tigers take vengeance on innocent and guilty men alike. It will not be safe for you to be abroad."

"How brave you are," he said, "to say the name of the tiger boldly. Your people always speak of him as 'My Lord'."

He saw her slow smile in the moonlight.

"Perhaps the Town remembers the little bag of tiger dust my beloved took from the unmentionable Chiar Sung Loo. It is most rare. Besides, there are tigers and tigers. Most of them are stupid beasts intent only on feeding for existence. Ha, the Taos breed of the tiger berberato!"

"Ghost tigers!" he said. "I have heard Bourke believed in them. I do not. Anyway, it happens I have never killed a tiger, so no spirit need take vengeance on me."

"Then, it is not dead tigers you need fear. But you will give me the word of a white Town that you will not leave my house until vengeance is accomplished!"

She swayed before him, yoking on her heels with her pretty head bent in supplication. He saw his pearls in a string around the creamy column of her throat. A queer fascination caught him as her head tilted and he looked into the black fire of her eyes, which slowly brightened until they were shining amber in the moonlighted porch. He was ready to grant her slightest wish, yet his mood was unaffected by her prettiness as a woman. She was no longer quite normal. He felt the burning desire of her vengeance toward Bourke's murderer as she rose and stood before him motionless, then spread her arms and beat her body as if dedicating herself to a mission.

She went from the house, but that night Dineen sat in a porch chair, dozing and waking until the dark hour before dawn, when in the night noises he heard another sound. Something crept stealthily nearer. The slanting moonlight showed a long shape stirring the flower hedge it came through. He saw a tawny body. Then to his horror it reared up on its hind legs, and the two forepaws and velvet-striped head of a tiger rose above the floor boards of the porch. He saw its shining green eyes, its bristling whiskers, its black muzzle and white fringe, the long claws clenched on the floor matting.

As he stared, the tiger head changed. Like breath blown on hot metal it was melted and blured. Before his transfixed gaze the velvet stripes of the head fused into the black hair of Bourke's wife, leaving her amber-tinted face. The tiger body flexed up the steps, transforming itself into the slender body of the girl, which stood there shuddering, her black hair veiling areas that were torn and scratched. Our hand

was drawn across her lips and came away stained darkly. Then she saw Dineen in the porch chair.

Hage leaped furiously to life in her tired flesh.

"Tuan, how dare you sleep here? Long have we nursed you through fever. The night chill will bring it on again."

"I'm not afraid of night chill or ghost tigers!" he said gruffly.

He heard a gasping sob as she vanished in the house, heard her cat creak as she dropped on it to sleep.

That day Dineen waited for Inbam, who was plainly reluctant to speak of the fate of Bourke or the ruse to fetch Omar Sung Los-tiger-trapping, until Dineen forced him to talk by mentioning that Inbam had deserted him in the jungle, a crime for which the punishment was severe if complaint was made.

"I shall not interfere with your affairs, Inbam, but I want some questions answered. Otherwise—" his tone held a threat. "Now tell me what became of the helpers of that Chinese surgeon in the jungle *kampong*?"

"Facts, they were killed by a tigress and the ants have picked their bones."

"And your knownman in this house, had she a hand in that vengeance, Inbam?" he asked.

"Of a truth, Tuan, is she not the widow of a white? That the Chinese devils killed? More I cannot answer, except that what is written, is written."

"Where does Bourke's widow go by night, Inbam?"

"Tuan, I dare not follow her to know."

"But you know where she goes, Inbam."

"Tuan, I know only that what is written, is written!"

"Where is Omar Sung Los, Inbam?"

"Word comes that he is on his way to trap tigers and should be here soon."

The widow slept all that day. Intrigued and curious about her, Dineen came to her couch and stood looking down through the mosquito-netting. An impulse prompted him to kiss the love-patches softly. Hearing it in her sleep, she stirred and sighed and began to murmur words. Dineen listened shamelessly.

"Beloved . . . five have I killed . . . I leaped from the gloom. My fangs gripped and shook them. A golden death all too merciful for such dogs. They were no men, Beloved . . . And I have bisected four murderer shall not escape long."

Dineen went quietly away and sat brooding on the mysterious and unanswerable problems until tiffin, but the widow did not appear. He finally went to bed but by awake, and as the moon sailed high he was aware of her soundless gliding to the door and into the lower hedge. He followed and found the black sashong she had left there.

He had slept that afternoon and had no difficulty staying awake until the hour she returned. From inside the house he watched again until he heard the soft thud of bounding paws and distinctly saw by a moon late enough to leave its faint glow by dawndight, the striped body of the tigress transformed as it glided over the porch, into the body of Bourke's widow. He saw the startling green glow of her eyes as she went to her room. That morning he stood beside her again and saw the change in her appearance. She had been a dainty, perfumed creature. Now her face was haggard, her amber-coloured flesh was sottish, her nails were broken and grimed, and about her was the fetid odor of the great carnivore's breath, faint yet distinct.

As he watched, her body moved, stretched and coiled again like a cat, and her fingers flexed and spread like claws. Diancon touched her wrist. Without a movement her eyes opened their glowing green fire, yet in the light the iris narrowed to a thin slit of emerald flame. Her head rubbed against his arm, and like a kitten her tongue licked at his hand.

He jerked back and spoke sharply. Blood oozed to the surface of the skin her tongue had rasped. Then he regretted speaking, for she wakened fully, and he saw she was bewilkered, and shuddered convulsively, moaning a little.

"I dreamed, Tuan! I dreamed I was caught in a trap!"

"Then take warning," he said gently. "Leave vengeance to the gods." Then, ashamed of a speech that betrayed his own weak shappling into a belief in this dreadful metempsychosis, he left her abruptly, thinking it was high time he closed out and went back to the hunting of his own logical-minded race.

"Tomorrow I leave," he announced to her late that afternoon.

She did not demur, and as usual disappeared as the moon rose. As before, he waited until dawn, but this time his vigil was fruitless. She did not return. Remembering that she sometimes stayed away for a few days, he was not alarmed until Lubam came running in the noonday heat when no native willingly stirrs abroad. He was greatly upset and excited and almost incandescent as he blurted out the news that Ouart Sung Los had trapped a splendid tigress and was stripping her back to her dampung.

"Tuan, you must buy this tigress and set it free," wailed Lubam. "I tried to buy it. I offered all I possessed and all my kinsfolk possessed, but he will not sell. Tuan, he trapped the tigress with bags of white dust he scatters, a magic powder that made her forget her cowering and roll in it like a cub at play. But she must be freed, Tuan. Buy her. By your hope of Paradise, you must free this tigress."

Diancon leaned forward in his chair, staring at the agonized Lubam.

"Why should I set this tigress free?" he demanded.

"By the spirit of Tuas Bourke, who was your friend, you must. Tuan,

it is past the belief of a white Tuan. But the tigress is my kinswoman, the wife of Tuau Rourke!"

"Nonsense," shouted Dineen. "You lie to me!"

"Tuan, I speak truth. She is a tigress *berkantu*. A ghost tigress."

"Then why should cage bars hold her, Isham?"

"Tuan, it is that magic tiger chest of Ouar Sung Loo drugging her senses. She lies contented licking it, rolling in the dirty straw, she who loved perfumes and silks and jewels. Tuan, see her and know if I lie to you. She wears the pearls you gave her on her neck!"

Dineen laughed harshly. These nightmares were sending him mad. Reason was rattling like would get out at once. Isham agreed to go with him, but when they started from the village they learned that Ouar Sung Loo had gone, the tigress was on her way to his kampong. Dineen now by a desire to see the finish of the affair, Dineen followed. The lumbering cage on cart-wheels, drawn by oxcabao, was somewhere on the river road, but Dineen took a boat and some time in the night he passed it.

He waited in the village until word came that Ouar Sung Loo had returned. Then with a loaded gun in his pocket he went to the kampong.

Ouar Sung Loo stood at the gate and barred his way belligerently. Smirking and defiant, he said he had nothing for sale.

"You captured a tigress. I will buy her," said Dineen.

"She is not for sale, Tuan. Down her black throat has gone more of my magic powder than she is worth. Yet I have an affection for the beast and will not sell her."

"Let me see her!" Dineen's gun poked the belly of Ouar Sung Loo and his finger curved on the trigger. The dealer snarled and backed toward the kampong where the tigress lay in her cage on dirty jungle grass, her tongue lolling thirstily, her eyes glowing green with hate and fear. She croaked and snarled as Ouar Sung Loo came near, and her little paw reached through the bars.

Dineen held Ouar Sung Loo in a corner by the cage, with his gun still abrusing the brown skin. The eyes of Ouar fell an heedless stare, Dineen began to whistle, then to sing the tune of the love pantom he had heard Rourke's wife sing, and again heard roared from the throat of a bull ape in the jungle.

The effect on the tigress was startling. She lifted her head and roared. She worked herself into a fury and her long claws tore splatters from the cage bars. Then she went into a fury that made the wooden crates creak and strain. Ouar snarled in fear, his defiance was gone.

"Tuan, she was kept without food or water, but the cage bars cannot hold her now. They are breaking!"

It was true. Two of the bars were gone. The head of the tigress and

one foreleg came through. Omer Sung Lee's shaking fingers grabbed a sack of tiger dust from his lion-rag and he tried to loosen the string.

The tigress leaped to earth, and came toward them, her great pads stepping deliberately, daintily, but she was snarling her rage. Fear-stricken, Omer shook the sack of tiger dust, but a hot wind carried it high in air, over the pond. His scream was pained, but it was cut short as the tigress leaped.

Dineen whirled as he saw the animal's jaws fasten on the neck of Omer, and she shook him like a rat. His body fell and lay still, blood pulsing from his neck into the dust. Over him the tigress stood, her ears laid back, snarling at Dineen. He saw her body flatten, her muscles gathered to leap.

There came the quick staccato of gunshots and the beautiful breast dropped slowly over the body of the man she had killed.

Dineen darted toward the gate. There he halted to look back. He stared, rubbed his eyes and retraced his steps. A cry of near madness came from his lips.

In the sun-baked bamboo dust lay the dead Omer Sung Lee, face down, and over his shoulders was the amber-tinted body of a woman. Blood drained like scarlet ribbons from the bullet wounds in her breast. About her neck was the string of small pearls he had given the wife of Tom Franklin but it seemed to him her lips smiled and in her partly opened eyes was a look of triumph slowly dimming as they glazed in the shell of death.

An Episode of Cathedral History

by M. R. James

"An Episode of Cathedral History" is one of the least reprinted tales of the late Priest of Eton College, Dr. Montague Rhodes James. But it is one of the five stories singled out by H. F. Lowcock as worth special note in "Supernatural Stories in Literature." Lowcock summarizes the rules laid down by Dr. James for the macabre tale: "A ghost story, he believes, should have a further setting in the modern period, in order to approach closely the reader's sphere of existence. Its spectral phenomena should be ridiculous rather than beautiful, since fear is the emotion primarily to be excited. And finally the technical potion of occultism or pseudo-science ought to be avoided lest the charm be shattered in incongruous pedantry." The reader will note for himself how Dr. James abhors these rules to such his horror, almost.

JHERE WAS once a learned gentleman who was deputed to examine and report upon the archives of the Cathedral of Southminster. The compilation of these records demanded a very considerable expenditure of time; hence it became advisable for him to engage lodgings in the city; for though the Cathedral body were profuse in their offers of hospitality, Mr. Lake felt that he would prefer to be master of his day. This was recognized as reasonable.

The Dean eventually wrote advising Mr. Lake, if he were not already suited, to communicate with Mr. Worby, the principal Verger, who occupied a house convenient to the church and was prepared to take in a quiet lodger for three or four weeks. Such an arrangement was precisely what Mr. Lake desired. Terms were easily agreed upon, and early in December, like another Mr. Datchery (as he remarked to himself), the investigator found himself in the occupation of a very comfortable room in an ancient and "cathedraly" house.

One so familiar with the customs of Cathedral churches, and treated with such obvious consideration by the Dean and Chapter of this Cathedral in particular, could not fail to command the respect of the Head Verger. Mr. Worby even acquiesced in certain modifications of statements he had been accustomed to offer for years to parties of visitors. Mr. Lake, on his part, found the Verger a very cheery companion, and took advantage of any occasion that presented itself for copying his extirpation when the day's work was over.

One evening, about nine o'clock, Mr. Worby knocked at his lodger's door. "I've occasion," he said, "to go across to the Cathedral. Mr. Lake, and I think I made you a promise when I did so, that I would give you the opportunity to see what it looks like at night time. It's quite fine and dry outside, if you care to come."

"To be sure I will, very much obliged to you, Mr. Worby, for thinking of it, but let me get my coat."

"There it is, sir, and I've another lantern here that you'll find advisable for the steps, as there's no moon."

"Any one might think we were Jasper and Dantiles, over again, mightn't they?" said Lake, as they crossed the close, for he had ascertained that the Verger had paid *Eustace Freed*.

"Well, so they might," said Mr. Worby, with a short laugh, "though I don't know whether we ought to take it as a compliment! Odd ways, I often think, they keep at that Cathedral, don't it seem so to you, sir? Full choral matins at seven o'clock in the morning all the year round. Wouldn't suit our boys' voices, nowadays, and I think there's one or two of the men would be applying for a rest if the Chapter was to bring it in, particularly the albs."

They were now at the south-west door. As Mr. Worby was unlocking it, Lake said, "Did you ever find anybody locked in here by accident?"

"Twice I did. One was a drunk sailor, however he got in I don't know. I suppose he meant to sleep in the service, but by the time I got to him he was praying fit to bring the roof in. Lor' what a noise that man did make! and it was the first time he'd been inside a church for ten years, and bless it ever he'd try it again. The other was an old sheep-them boy; it was, up to their knees. That was the last time they tried it on, though. There, sir, now you see what we look like, our late Dean used now and again to bring parties in, but he preferred a moonlight night, and there was a piece of voice he'd coax to 'em, relating to a Scotch cathedral, I understand, but I don't know, I almost think the cleric's better when it's all dark-like. Seems to add to the size and height. Now if you won't mind stopping somewhere in the nave while I go up into the choir where my business lays, you'll see what I mean."

Accordingly Lake waited, leaning against a pillar, and watched the light wavering along the length of the church, and up the steps into the choir, until it was intercepted by some screen or other furniture, which only allowed the reflection to be seen on the pews and roof. Not many minutes had passed before Worby reappeared at the door of the choir and by waving his lantern signalled to Lake to rejoin him.

"I suppose it is Worby and not a substitute," thought Lake to himself, as he walked up the nave. There was, in fact, nothing unusual.

Worby showed him the papers which he had come to fetch out of the Dean's stall, and asked him what he thought of the spectacle. Lake agreed that it was well worth seeing. "I suppose," he said, as they walked towards the altar-steps together, "that you're too much used to going about here at night to feel nervous—but you must get a start every now and then, don't you, when a book falls down or a door swings to?"

"No, Mr. Lake, I can't say I think much about noises, not nowadays: I'm much more afraid of finding an escape of gas or a burst in the above pipes than anything else. Still there have been times, years ago. Did you notice that plain alter-tomb there—fifteenth century we say it is. I don't know if you agree to that? Well, if you didn't look at it, just come back and give it a glance, if you'd be so good." It was on the north side of the choir, and rather awkwardly placed, only about three feet from the enclosing stone screen. Quite plain, as the Verger had said, but for some ordinary stone paneling. A metal cross of some sort on the northern side (that next to the screen) was the solitary feature of any interest.

Lake agreed that it was not earlier than the Perpendicular period. "But," he said, "unless it's the tomb of some remarkable person, you'll forgive me for saying that I don't think it's particularly noteworthy."

"Well, I can't say as it is the tomb of anybody noted in history," said Worby, who had a dry smile on his face. "For we don't own any record whatsoever of who it was put up to. For all that, if you've half an hour to spare, sir, when we get back to the house, Mr. Lake, I could tell you a tale about that tomb. I won't begin on it now, it strikes cold here, and we don't want to be dawdling about all night."

"Of course I should like to hear it immensely."

"Very well, sir, you shall. Now if I might put a question to you," he went on, as they passed down the choir aisle. "In my little local guide—and not only there, but in the little book on our Cathedral in the series—you'll find it stated that this portion of the building was erected previous to the twelfth century. Now of course I should be glad enough to take that view, but—just the step, sir—hut, I put it to you—does the lay of the stone 'e'er in this portion of the wall (which he tapped with his key), does it to your eye carry the flavour of what you might call Seven masonry? No, I thought not, no more it does to me, now, if you'll believe me. I've said as much to others now, one's the librarian of our Free Library here and the other came down from London on purpose—fifty times, if I have ever, but I might just as well have talked to that bit of stonework. But then it is, I suppose every one's got their opinion."

The discussion of this peculiar trait of human nature occupied Mr. Worby almost up to the moment when he and Lake re-entered the former's house. The condition of the fire in Lake's sitting-room led

to a suggestion from Mr. Worby that they should finish the evening in his own parlour. We find them accordingly settled there some short time afterwards.

Mr. Worby made his story a long one, and I will not undertake to tell it wholly in his own words, or in his own order. Lake committed the substance of it to paper immediately after hearing it, together with some few passages of the narrative which had fixed themselves verbatim in his mind. I shall probably find it expedient to condense Lake's account to some extent.

Mr. Worby was born, it appeared, about the year 1828. His father before him had been connected with the Cathedral, and likewise his grandfather. One or both had been chasers, and no later his both had done work as mason and carpenter respectively about the fabric. Worby himself, though possessed, as he frankly acknowledged, of an indifferent voice, had been drafted into the choir at about ten years of age.

It was in 1849 that the wave of the Gothic revival swept the Cathedral of Southwark. "There was a lot of freely stuff went then, sir," said Worby, with a sigh. "My father couldn't hardly believe it when he got his orders to clear out the then. There was a new train just come in. Dean Burscough it was—and my father had been purchased by a good firm of joiners in the city, and knew what good work was when he saw it. Good it was, he used to say: all that beautiful work of oak, as good as the day it was put up, and garlands-like of foliage and fruit, and lovely old gilding work on the crests of arms and the organ pipes. All went to the timber yard—every bit except some little pieces worked up in the Lady Chapel, and 'ere in this overmantled. Well, I may be astray, but I say not thou never looked as well since. Still there was a lot known not about the history of the church, and we doubt but what it did stand in need of repair. There was very few weights passed but what we'd lose a pinnacle." Mr. Lake expressed his concurrence with Worby's views of restoration, but owing to a fear about this point lest the story proper should never be reached. Fovally this was perceptible in his manner.

Worby hastened to reassure him. "Not but what I could carry on about that topic for hours at a time, and do so when I see my opportunity. But Dr. in Burscough he was very set on the Gothic point, and nothing would move him but everything must be made agreeable to that. And one morning, after service he appointed for my father to meet him in the choir, and he came back after he'd taken off his robes in the vestry, and he'd lay a roll of paper with him, and the singer that was then brought in a table, and they began spreading it out on the table with proper books to keep it down, and my father helped 'em, and he saw it was a picture of the inside of a choir in a Cathedral, and the Dean—he was a quick-spoken gentleman—he says, 'Well, Worby,

what do you think of that?" "Why," says my father, "I don't think I've the pleasure of knowing that view. Would that be Hereford Cathedral, Mr. Dean?" "No, Worby," says the Dean, "that's Southwark Cathedral as we hope to see it before many years." "Indeed, sir," says my father, and that was all he did say—leastways to the Dean—but he used to tell me he felt really faint in himself when he looked round our choir as I can remember it, all comfortable and furnished-like, and then see this nasty little dry picture, as he called it, drawn out by some London architect. Well, there I am again. But you'll see what I mean if you look at this old view."

Worby reached down a framed print from the wall. "Well, the long and the short of it was that the Dean he handed over to my father a copy of an order of the Chapter that he was to clear out every bit of the choir—make a clean sweep—ready for the new work that was being designed up in town, and he was to put it in hand as soon as ever he could get the breakers together. Now then, sir, if you look at that view, you'll see where the pulpit used to stand: that's what I want you to notice, if you please." It was, indeed, easily seen, an unusually large structure of timber with a domed sounding-board, standing at the east end of the stalls on the north side of the choir, facing the bishop's throne. Worby proceeded to explain that during the alterations, services were held in the nave, the members of the choir being thereby disappointed of an anticipated holiday, and the organist in particular incensing the suspicion of having wilfully damaged the mechanism of the temporary organ that was hired at considerable expense from London.

The work of demolition began with the choir screen and organ left, and proceeded gradually eastwards, disclosing, as Worby said, many interesting features of older work. While this was going on, the members of the Chapter were, naturally, in and about the choir a great deal, and it soon became apparent to the elder Worby—who could not help overhearing some of their talk—that, on the part of the senior Canons especially, there must have been a good deal of disagreement before the policy now being carried out had been adopted. Some were of opinion that they should catch their deaths of cold in the return-stalls, unprotected by a screen from the draughts in the nave; others objected to being exposed to the views of persons in the choir aisles, especially, they said, during the sermons, when they found it helpful to have in a posture which was liable to misinterpretation. The strongest opposition, however, came from the oldest of the body, who up to the last moment objected to the removal of the pulpit. "You ought not to touch it, Mr. Dean," he said with great emphasis one evening, when the two were standing before it: "you don't know what mischief you may do." "Mischief? it's not a work of my particular merit, Canon." "Don't call me Canon," said the old man with great

asperity, "that is, for thirty years I've been known as Dr. Aylott, and I shall be obliged, Mr. Dean, if you would kindly humour me in that matter. And as to the pulpit (which I've preached from for thirty years, though I don't insist on that), all I'll say is, I know you're doing wrong in moving it." "But what sense could there be, my dear Doctor, in leaving it where it is, when we're fitting up the rest of the choir in a totally different style? What reason could be given—apart from the look of the thing?" "Reason reason!" said old Dr. Aylott. "If you young men—if I may say so without any disrespect, Mr. Dean—if you'd only listen to reason a little, and not be always asking for it, we should get on better. But there, I've said my say." The old gentleman babbled off, and as it proved, never entered the Cathedral again. The season—it was a hot summer—turned sickly on a sudden. Dr. Aylott was one of the first to go, with acute affection of the muscles of the thorax, which took him painfully at night. And at many services the number of chouristers and boys was very thin.

Meanwhile the pulpit had been done away with. In fact, the sounding-board (part of which still exists as a table in a summer-house in the palace garden) was taken down within an hour or two of Dr. Aylott's passing. The removal of the base—not effected without considerable trouble—disclosed to view, greatly to the satisfaction of the restoring party, an altar-tomb—the tomb, of course, to which Worby had attracted Lake's attention that same evening. Much fruitless research was expended in attempts to identify the occupant; from that day to this he has never had a name put to him. The structure had been most carefully buried in under the pulpit base, so that such slight ornament as it possessed was not defaced; only on the north side of it there was what looked like an injury, a gap between two of the slabs composing the side. It might be two or three inches across. Palmer, the mason, was directed to fill it up in a week's time, when he came to do some other small jobs near that part of the church.

The season was undoubtedly a very trying one. Whether the church was built on a site that had once been a marsh, as was suggested, or for whatever reason, the residents in its immediate neighbourhood had, many of them but little enjoyment of the equable sunny days and the calm nights of August and September. To several of the older people—Dr. Aylott, among others, as we have seen—the summer proved downright fatal, but even among the younger, few escaped either a sojourn in bed for a matter of weeks, or at the least, a badning sense of oppression, accompanied by hateful nightmares. Gradually there formulated itself a suspicion—which grew into a conviction—that the alterations in the Cathedral had something to say in the matter. The widow of a former old verger, a pensioner of the Chapter of Southminster, was visited by dreams, which she related to her friends, of a shape that slipped out of the little door of the south

transcript as the dark fell in, and flitted—taking a fresh direction every night—about the Close, disappearing for a while in house after house, and finally emerging again when the night sky was paleing. She could see nothing of it, she said, but that it was a moving form; only she had an impression that when it returned to the church, as it seemed to do in the end of the dream, it turned its head, and then, she could not tell why, but she thought it had red eyes. Worby remembered her hearing the old lady tell this dream at a tea-party in the home of the chapter clerk. Its recurrence might, perhaps, he said, be taken as a symptom of approaching illness; at any rate before the end of September the old lady was in her grave.

The interest excited by the restoration of this great church was not confined to its own county. One day that summer an F.S.A., of some celebrity, visited the place. His business was to write an account of the discoveries that had been made, for the Society of Antiquaries, and his wife, who accompanied him, was to make a series of illustrative drawings for his report. In the morning she employed herself in making a general sketch of the choir, in the afternoon she devoted herself to details. She first drew the newly exposed altar-tomb, and when that was finished, she called her husband's attention to a beautiful piece of diaper-ornament on the screen just behind it, which had, like the tomb itself, been completely concealed by the pulpit. Of course, he said, an illustration of that must be made; so she seated herself on the tomb and began a careful drawing which occupied her till dusk.

Her husband had by this time finished his work of measuring and description, and they agreed that it was time to be getting back to their hotel. "You may as well brush my skirt, Frank," said the lady, "it must have got covered with dust, I'm sure." He obeyed dutifully, but, after a moment, he said, "I don't know whether you value this dress particularly, my dear, but I'm inclined to think it's seen its best days. There's a great bit of it gone." "Gone? Where?" said she. "I don't know where it's gone, but it's off at the bottom edge behind here." She pulled it hastily into sight, and was horrified to find a jagged tear extending some way into the substance of the stuff, very small, she said, as if a dog had rent it away. The dress was, in any case, hopelessly spoilt, to her great vexation, and though they looked everywhere, the missing piece could not be found. There were injury ways, they concluded, in which the injury might have come about, for the choir was full of old bits of woodwork with nails sticking out of them. Finally, they could only suppose that one of these had caused the mischief, and that the workman, who had been about all day, had carried off the particular piece with the fragment of dress still attached to it.

It was about this time, Worby thought, that his little dog began to wear an anxious expression when the time for it to be put into the shed in the back yard approached. (For his mother had ordered that

it must not sleep in the house? One evening, he said, when he was just going to pick it up and carry it out, it looked at him like a Christian, and wagged its' tail, I was going to say—well, you know how they do carry on sometimes, and the end of it was I put it under my coat, and tickled it upstairs—and I'm afraid I as good as deceived my poor mother on the subject. After that the dog acted very artful with 'holding itself under the bed for half an hour or more before bed-time came, and we walked it so as my mother never found out what we'd done." Of course Worby was glad of its company anyhow, but more particularly when the instance that is still remembered in Southminster as "the crying" set in.

"Night after night," said Worby, "that dog seemed to know it was coming. he'd creep out, he would, and snuggle into the bed and cuddle right up to me sleeping, and when the crying come he'd be like a wild thing, shoving his head under my arm, and I was fully wiser as had six or seven times we'd hear it, not more, and when he'd done out how'd again I'd know it was over for that night. What was it like, sir? Well, I never heard but one thing that seemed to hit it off. I happened to be playing about in the Close, and there was two of the Convent nuns and said Good morning' one to another. 'Sleep well last night?' says one—it was Mr. Headlow that one, and Mr. Lyall was the other. 'Ain't say I did,' says Mr. Lyall, rather too much of truth now. '14 for me,' says Mr. Headlow, "what's that?" "You call yourself a Bible reader!" says Mr. Lyall. (Mr. Headlow, you must know, he was one of what used to be termed Simeon's lot—pretty much what we should call the Evangelical party.) "Ten go and look it up." I wanted to know what he was getting at myself, and so off I ran home and got out my own Bible, and there it was. 'the sinner shall cry to his fellow.' Well, I thought, is that what we're been listening to these past nights? and I tell you it made me look over my shoulder a time or two. Of course I'd asked my father and mother about what it could be before that, but they both said it was most likely rats, but they spoke very short, and I could see they was troubled. My word! that was a noise—ugly like, as if it was calling after someone that wouldn't come. If ever you felt you wanted company, it would be when you was waiting for it to begin again. I believe two or three nights there was no a just on to watch in different parts of the Close, but they all used to get together in one corner, the nearest they could to the High Street, and nothing ease of it.

"Well, the next thing was this. Me and another of the boys—he's in business in the city now as a grocer, like his father before him—we'd gone up in the close after morning service was over, and we heard old Palmer the mason bellowing to some of his men. So we went up nearer, because we knew he was a rusty old chap and there might be some fun going. It appears Palmer'd told this man to stop up the

chink in that old tomb. Well, there was this man keeping on saying he'd done it the best he could, and there was Palmer carrying on like all possessed about it. 'Call that making a job of it?' he says. 'If you had your rights you'd get the task for this. What do you suppose I pay you your wages for? What do you suppose I'm going to say to the Dean and Chapter when they come round, as chance they may do any time, and see where you've been bungling about covering the 'ole place with mess and plaster and Lord knows what?' 'Well, master, I done the best I could,' says the man, 'I don't know no more than what you do 'ow it come to fall out this way. I tampered it right in the 'ole,' he says, 'and now it's fall out,' he says, 'I never see.'

'Fall out?' says old Palmer, 'why it's nowhere near the place Blowed out, you mean', and he picked up a bit of plaster, and so did I, that was laying up against the screen, three or four feet off, and not dry yet; and old Palmer he looked at it curious-like, and then he turned round on me and he says, 'Now then, you boys, have you been up to some of your games here?' 'No,' I says, 'I haven't, Mr. Palmer, there's none of us been about here till just this minute', and while I was talking the other boy, Evans, he got looking in through the chink, and I heard him draw in his breath, and he came away sharp and up to us, and says he, 'I believe there's something in there. I saw something shiny.' 'What! I dare say!' says old Palmer, 'well, I ain't got time to stop about there. You, William, you go off and get some more stuff and make a job of it this time, if not, there'll be trouble in my yard,' he says.

'So the man he went off, and Palmer too, and us boys stopped behind, and I says to Evans, 'Did you really see anything in there?' 'Yes,' he says, 'I did indeed.' So then I says, 'Let's throw something in and stir it up.' And we tried several of the bits of wood that was laying about, but they were all too big. Then Evans he had a sheet of music he'd brought with him, an anthem or a service, I forget which it was now, and he rolled it up small and shoved it in the chink two or three times he did it, and nothing happened. 'Give it me, boy, I said, and I had a try. No, nothing happened. Then, I don't know why I thought of it, I'm sure, but I stooped down just opposite the chink and put my two fingers in my mouth and whistled—you know the way—and at that I seemed to think I heard something stirring, and I says to Evans, 'Come away,' I says, 'I don't like this.' 'Oh, rot,' he says, 'give me that roll,' and he took it and shoved it in. And I don't think ever I see anyone go so pale as he did. 'I say, Wurby,' he says, 'it's caught, or else someone's got hold of it.' 'Pull it out or leave it,' I says. 'Come and let's get off.' So he gave a good pull, and it came away. Leastways most of it did, but the end was gone. Turn off it was, and Evans looked at it for a second and then he gave a sort of a chuck and let it drop, and we both made off out of there as quick as ever we could. When we got

outside Evans says to me, "Did you see the end of that paper?" "No," I say, "only it was torn." "Yes, it was," he says, "but it was wet too, and black!" Well, partly because of the light we had, and partly because that music was wanted in a day or two, and we knew there'd be a set-out about it with the organist, we didn't say nothing to anyone else, and I suppose the workmen they swept up the bit that was left along with the rest of the rubbish. But Evans, if you were to ask him this very day about it, he'd stick to it he saw that paper wet and black at the end where it was torn."

After that the boys gave the choir a wide berth, so that Worley was not sure what was the result of the mason's renewed muddling of the tomb. Only he made out from fragments of conversation dropped by the workmen passing through the choir that some difficulty had been met with, and that the governor—Mr. Palmer to wit—had tried his own hand at the job. A little later, he happened to see Mr. Palmer himself knocking at the door of the Drapery and being admitted by the butler. A day or so after that, he gathered from a remark his father let fall at breakfast that something a little out of the common way was to be done at the Cathedral after morning service on the morrow. "And I'd just as soon it was to day," his father added, "I don't see the use of running risks." "Father," I says, what are you going to do in the Cathedral to morrow? And he turned on me as savage as I ever see him—he was a wonderful good tempered man as a general thing, my poor father was. "My lad," he says, "I'll trouble you not to go peeking up your old' fool-bettors talk—it's not manners and it's not straight. What I'm going to do is not going to do in the Cathedral to morrow is none of your business, and if I catch sight of you hanging about the place to-morrow after you will's done, I'll send you home with a flea in your ear. Now you mind that!" Oh course I did! I was very sorry and that, and equally of course I went off and had my plans with Evans. We knew there was a stair up in the corner of the transept which you can get up to the tribune, and in them days the door to it was pretty well always open, and even if it wasn't we knew the key usually laid under a lot of matting laid by. So we made up our minds we'd be putting away music and that, next morning while the rest of the boys was clearing off, and then slip up the stairs and watch from the tribune if there was any signs of work going on.

"Well, that same night I dropped off asleep as sound as a boy does, and all of a sudden the dog woke me up, coming into the bed, and thought I now we're going to get it sharp, for he seemed more frightened than usual. After about five minutes time enough came this cry I can't give you no idea what it was like, and so near, too—nearer than I'd heard it yet—and a funny thing, Mr. Lake, you know what a place this Close is for an echo, and particular if you stand this side of it. Well, this crying never made no sign of an echo at all. But, as I said, it

was dreadful near this night, and on the top of the start I got with hearing it, I got another fright, for I heard something rustling outside in the passage. Now to be sure I thought I was done, but I noticed the dog seemed to perk up a bit, and next there was someone whispered outside the door, and I very near laughed me dead, for I knew it was my father and mother that had got out of bed with the noise. 'What-ever is it?' says my mother. 'Hush! I don't know,' says my father, excited-like, 'don't disturb the boy. I hope he didn't hear nothing.'

"So, me knowing they were just outside, it made me bolder, and I slipped out of bed across to my little window—giving on the Chase—but the dog he barked right down to the bottom of the bed—and I looked out. First go off I couldn't see anything. Then right down in the shadow under a buttress I made out what I shall always say was two spots of red—a dull red it was—nothing like a lamp or a fire, but just so as you could pick 'em out of the black shadow. I hadn't but just sighted 'em when it seemed me wasn't the only people that had been disturbed, because I see a window in a house on the left-hand side became lighted up, and the light moving. I just turned my head to make sure of it, and then looked back into the shadow for those two red things, and they were gone, and for all I peered about and stared, there was not a sign more of them. Then come my last fright that night—something come against my bare leg, but that was all right, that was my little dog had crawled out of bed and pawing about making a great to-do, only holding his tongue, and me seeing he was quite n smart again, I took him back to bed and we slept the night out!"

"Next morning I made out to tell my mother I'd had the dog in my room, and I was surprised, after all she'd said about it before, how quiet she took it. 'Did you?' she says. 'Well, by good rights you ought to go without your breakfast for doing such a thing behind my back, but I don't know as there's any great harm done, only another time you ask my permission, do you hear? A bit sicker than I said something to my father about having heard the cats again. 'Tuts!' he says, and he looked over at my poor mother, and she coughed and he says, 'Oh! ah yes, cats—I believe I heard 'em myself.'

"That was a funny morning altogether: nothing seemed to go right. The organist he stopped in bed, and the minot Cains he forgot it was the 13th day and waited for the Venetian; and after a bit the deputy he set off playing the chant for evening, which was a minor, and then the Decani boys were laughing so much they couldn't sing, and when it came to the anthem the solo boy he got took with the giggles, and made out his nose was bleeding, and showed the book at me what hadn't practised the verse and wasn't much of a singer if I had known it. Well, things was rougher, you see, fifty years ago, and I got a rip from the estimator-truer behind me that I remembered,

"so we got through somehow, and neither the men nor the boys

weren't by way of waiting to see whether the Canon in residence—Mr. Henslow it was—would come to the vestries and fine 'em, but I don't believe he did; for one thing I fancy he'd send the wrong lesson for the first time in his life, and knew it. Anyhow, Evans said we didn't find no difficulty in slipping up the stairs as I told you, and when we got up we laid ourselves down flat on our stomachs where we could just stretch our heads out over the old rails, and we hadn't but just done so when we heard the verger that was then, first shutting the main porch-gates and locking the southwest door, and then the transept door, so we knew there was something up, and they meant to keep the public out for a bit.

"Next thing was, the Dean and the Canon come in by their door on the north, and then I see my father, and old Palmer, and a couple of them best men, and Palmer stood a talking for a bit with the Dean in the middle of the choir. He had a coil of rope and the men had arrows. All of 'em looked a bit nervous. So there they stood talking, and at last I heard the Dean say, 'Well, I've no time to waste, Palmer. If you think that'll satisfy Southampton people, I'll permit it to be done; but I must say this, that never in the whole course of my life have I heard such arrant nonsense from a practical man as I have from you. Don't you agree with me, Henslow?' As far as I could hear Mr. Henslow said something like 'Oh, well! we're told, aren't we, Mr. Dean, not to judge others?' And the Dean he gave a kind of snuff, and walked straight up to the tomb, and took his stand behind it with his back to the verger, and the others they come edging up other gingerly. Henslow, he stopped on the south side and scratched on his chin, he did. Then the Dean spoke up: 'Palmer,' he says, 'which end you do easiest, get the slab off the top or shift one of the side slabs?'

"Old Palmer and his men they pattered about a bit looking round the edge of the top slab and running the sides on the south and east and west and everywhere but the north. Henslow said somethin' about it being better to have a bay at the south side, because there was more light and more room to move about in. Then my father, who'd been watching of them, went round to the north side, and lurched down and felt of the slab by the shank, and he got up and dusted his hands and says to the Dean: 'Beg pardon, Mr. Dean, but I think if Mr. Palmer'll try this here slab he'll find it'll come out easy enough. Seems to me one of the men could prise it out with his cross by means of this chink.' 'Ah! thank you, Worley,' says the Dean, 'that's a good suggestion. Palmer, let one of your men do that, will you?'

"So the man come round, and put his hand in and heave on it, and put the pyramid when they were all leaning over, and we know just run hands well over the edge of the triforium, there wasn't a hand broad enough down at the west end of the choir as it is, whole stick of big timber had fallen down a flight of steps. Well, you can't expect us to

tell you everything that happened all in a minute. Of course there was a terrible commotion. I heard the slab fall out, and the crowbar on the floor, and I heard the Dean say, 'Good God!'

"When I looked down again I saw the Dean tumbled over on the floor, the men was making oil down the choir. Henslow was just going to help the Dean up. Palmer was going to stop the men (as he said afterwards) and my father was sitting on the altar step with his face in his hands. The Dean he was very cross. 'I wish to goodness you'd look where you're coming to, Henslow,' he says. 'Why you should all take to you heels when a stick of wood tumbles down I cannot imagine', and all Henslow could do, explaining he was right away on the other side of the tank, would not satisfy him.

"Then Palmer came back and reported there was nothing to account for this noise and nothing seemingly fallen down, and when the Dean finished feeling of himself they gathered round—except my father, he sat where he was—and someone lighted up a bit of candle and they looked into the tomb. 'Nothing there,' says the Dean. 'What did I tell you? Stay! here's something. What's this?' a bit of music paper, and a piece of torn stuff—part of a dress it looks like. Both quite modern—it interest whatever. Another time perhaps you'll take the advice of an educated man—or something like that, and off he went, humping a bit, and out through the north door, only as he went he called back angry to Palmer for leaving the door standing open. Palmer called out 'Very sorry, sir,' but he shrugged his shoulders, and Henslow says, 'I fancy Mr. Dean's mistaken. I closed the door behind me but he's a little upset.' Then Palmer says, 'Why, where's Worby?' and they saw him sitting on the steps and went up to him. He was propping himself, it seemed, and wiping his forehead, and Palmer helped him up on to his legs, as I was glad to see.

"They were too far off for me to hear what they said, but my father pointed to the north door in the aisle, and Palmer and Henslow both of them looked very surprised and scared. After a bit, my father and Henslow went out of the church, and the others made what haste they could to put the slab back and place it in. And about as the clock struck twelve the Cathedral was opened again and us boys made the best of our way home.

"I was in a great taking to know what it was had given my poor father such a turn, and when I got in and found him sitting in his chair taking a glass of spirits, and my mother standing looking anxious at him, I couldn't keep from bursting out and making confessions where I'd been. But he didn't seem to take on, not in the way of losing his temper. 'You was there, was you?' Well, did you see it?' 'I see everything, father,' I said, 'except when the noise came.' 'Did you see what it was knocked the Dean over?' he says, 'that what come out of the monument? You didn't? Well, that's a mystery.' 'Why, what was it,

father?" I said. "Come, you must have seen it," he says. "Didn't you see? A thing like a man, all over hair, and two great eyes to it?"

"Well, that was all I could get out of him that time, and later on he seemed as if he was ashamed of being so frightened, and he used to put me off when I asked him about it. But years after, when I was got to be a grown man, we had more talk now and again on the matter, and he always said the same thing. 'Black it was,' he'd say, 'and a mass of hair, and two legs, and the light caught on its eyes.'

"Well, that's the talk of that tomb, Mr. Lake, it's one we don't tell to our visitors, and I should be obliged to you not to make any use of it till I'm out of the way. I doubt Mr. Evans'll feel the same as I do, if you ask him."

This proved to be the case. But over twenty years have passed by, and the grass is growing over both Worby and Evans; so Mr. Lake felt no difficulty about communicating his notes—taken in 1890—to me. He accompanied them with a sketch of the tomb and a copy of the short inscription on the metal cross which was affixed at the expense of Dr. Lyall to the centre of the northern side. It was from the Vulgate of Isaiah xxxv., and consisted merely of the three words—

IN CUBAVIT LAMIA.

puncturing the little man's business-like air. "I talked with the pilot before we crashed, big boy."

"Well? Well?" demanded Johnson.

"There's nothing here. Nothing!" Millet said. "No villages. No cities. No railroads. No cities. Nothing! This part of Canada has been lifeless since way back in 2030."

The three were silent, and for that moment the air was colder and the wind blew with added sharpness. The men shivered and moved together for more warmth.

"Eskimos?" Johnson asked, "there must be Eskimos around here. We'd get food, shelter, fat and all that sort of thing."

Millet slapped his hands together to keep the blood circulating and laughed loudly.

"Point one for circumspect!" he said. "Three citizens of New Denver, ready looking for primitive Eskimos to save them! Ha!"

He suddenly sobered and looked about him, and listened to the howling wind.

"There are no Eskimos here," he said. "When the War Disease came we survived. But the Eskimo is extinct."

"Have we got food?" Johnson asked.

"None," Millet said curtly, to dispel all false hopes.

"I am not sure," Weaver said slowly, "but five minutes before we crashed I'm sure I saw a thin line of smoke coming up from a valley. That valley there." He pointed toward a mountain range.

"Nonsense!" Millet muttered, looking at the despicable icy peaks.

"Nonsense?" Johnson shouted. "What do you mean nonsense? Who are you to say it's nonsense! Maybe there are explorers here, an expedition of some sort. We've nothing to lose. If there's a village we're saved. If not..."

"If not?" Millet asked, smiling.

Johnson ignored him. He drew his meagre overcoat more tightly about him and went out into the whirling snow. The three took one final look at the wreckage of the plane and the bodies that were already covered by a white mantle. Johnson led the way and Weaver followed, his movements becoming numb. Millet, face down to avoid the bite of the wind, brought up the rear.

The sun was already on the hill when they reached the mountain top and saw before them in the valley the strange city. It was a city, in the midst of the snow and the wind of arctic winter, and long spirals of grey smoke from snow-covered factories rose up into the heavens.

Dumbfounded, Millet stood at the city in the valley.

"There!" Johnson said triumphantly, "had you said this part of Canada was uninhabited. That's an industrial city of more than twenty thousand people!"

"In the arctic?" Millet asked, almost talking to himself. "So far

The Day Has Come

by Walter Kukliss

We're all cold about unexpected disaster that follows in the wake of our existence. A bomb or grenade, especially a dud, kept in a stalk as a memento of a past war, will suddenly explode. Everyone, for instance, and continue to have some pain after from the unexploded memento and shakily both would never —and there were both, still more now —actions for every person to cover. Walter Kukliss presents this fusion against the modern technology of sacrifice. His unforgettable story of a certain day two hundred years hence is one that might well come true.

JHERE WAS a whirling blizzard of trees past the window. One wing struck a crag and with a mighty crash the plane crashed itself against the mountain-side.

Some horns passed before Weaver snarled with a throbking pain in his arm. A cut shoulder was caked with frozen blood and the first thing he heard was the key whistle of the cold wind. He staggered his feet but fell back, fainting upon a drift of snow and would have been lost were it not for Millet's strong arm.

"Weaver!" Millet shouted above the roaring wind. "Are you all right?"

"I'm okay," Weaver said feebly. "Go to the others."

Millet bent to pick up Weaver's prostrate body and carried it clumsily over the soft snow to the meager protection of a nearby cove. Here Johnson was waiting by a small fire that was made from parts of the wreckage. Millet placed the wounded man next to the fire and quickly bandaged the bleeding arm.

"This will have to do," he said as he pinned the final knot upon a make-shift sling.

"The others! What about the others?" Weaver asked.

"There are no others," Millet said. "Just the three of us. The rest are dead."

"Well! Well!" the little man, Johnson, said impotently. "Why stand there like that, gopher? Do something! We have to get back to civilization! I have an important appointment in Norman next week. The air company will pay for that!"

"We're nowhere near Norman," Millet said, as if taking delight in

[including the little man's bantams like air. I talked with the pilot because we crashed, big boy.]

"Well! Well!" demanded Johnson.

"There's nothing here. Nothing!" Millet said. "No village. No cities. No railroads. No roads. Nothing! This part of Canada has been like last since way back in 2038."

The three were silent, and for that moment the air was colder and the wind blew with added sharpness. The men shivered and moved together for mere warmth.

"Eskimos?" Johnson asked. "There must be Eskimos around here. We'll get food, shelter, etc and all that sort of things."

Millet clasped his hands together to keep the blood churning and laughed loudly.

"Those ones for civilization?" he said. "Three citizens of New Democracy looking for primitive Eskimos to save them! Ha!"

He suddenly sobered and looked about him, and listened to the howling wind.

"There are no Eskimos here," he said. "When the War Disease came we survived but the Eskimos is extinct."

"Have we got loose?" Johnson asked.

"None," Millet said curtly, to dispel all false hopes.

"I am not sure," Weaver said slowly. "But five minutes before we crashed I'm sure I saw a thin line of smoke coming up from a valley. That way there." He pointed toward a mountain range.

"Nonsense!" Millet thundered, looking at the incomparable sky patches.

"Nonsense!" Johnson insisted. "What do you mean nonsense? Who are you to say it's nonsensical? Maybe there are explores here, an expedition of some sort. We've nothing to lose. If there's a village we're saved. If not..."

"If not?" Millet asked, smiling.

Johnson frowned him. He drew his meager overcoat more tightly about him and went out into the whirling snow. The three took one final look at the wreckage of the plane and the bodies that were already covered by a white mantle. Johnson led the way and Weaver followed, his arm rapidly becoming numb. Millet, face drawn to avoid the bite of the wind, brought up the rear.

The sun was already overriden when they reached the mountain top and saw before them in the valley the strange city. It was a city in the middle of the snow and the wind of arctic winter, and brief specks of grey smoke from snow-covered factories rose up into the sky vein. Dumbfounded, Millet stared at the city in the valley.

"There!" Johnson said triumphantly, "and you said this part of Canada was uninhabited. That's an industrial city of more than twenty thousand people!"

"Is the arctic?" Millet asked, almost talking to himself. "So far

north?" he raised his arm and pointed to all the sides of the city. "There are no railroads leaving it," he said.

"Maybe they're covered by snow," Johnson said. "Anyway, there are what seem to be flying fields."

They stopped talking and made their perilous way down to the floor of the valley. The descent proved dangerous, for each drift of snow might hide underneath it a deep chasm. By the time they reached the open valley it was nightfall, and the city was a haze three or four miles away.

They saw the lights of the factories go out and the lights of each individual home brighten. The sparks died from the giant chimneys but each individual house had its own tiny wisp of smoke pointing out of its own individual chimney.

As they made their way to the city they saw darkness settle upon it. The lights in the homes died down and when they came to its gates the city was asleep.

The streets were empty of people. The three exhausted men broke into one of the homes and collapsed before an electrically glowing fireplace.

For a time Weaver was dully surprised that the owner of the house did not bother to come downstairs and ask what they wanted, but he was much too tired to question that as sleep settled upon him and Millet and Johnson.

Refreshed, the three woke up with the morning sun and found, much to their surprise, that the house was empty.

Whoever was in during the night had already left. There were unmistakable signs of chaos having been moved and curtains lifted. It was a wooden house, wooden furniture, and all in simple style.

"They probably let us sleep, not wanting to disturb us," Johnson said.

"Any food in the house?" Weaver asked. Millet got up, stretched and yawned, and went to a small room which appeared to be a kitchen. He came back with two loaves of bread and a jar of water.

"This is all I could find," he said, cutting the bread and sharing it with Johnson and Millet.

"H'm," mumbled Johnson as he bit into the first slice. "Tough bread, but pretty good."

"Any idea what city this is?" Weaver asked, crunching the bread hungrily.

"No," Millet said between thirsty gulps. "Mav'n't the faintest idea. Factory town, that's evident."

When they had finished eating, they got up to investigate the house but could find nothing that would help them. There was no printed matter of any sort but for one sign which hung, almost reverently, over the mantelpiece. It read: "*The Day Will Come—Be Ready!*"

The other rooms were bare but for necessary furniture and clothes. The three searched the closets until they found warm coats that would fit them.

"This night seems like stealing," Millet said, "but we'll return them when we find out just what position we're in."

With stomachs full and warm clothes, Millet, Weaver and Johnson stepped out of the house into the street. It was bitterly cold but there was no wind. The high mountains that surrounded the valley seemed to protect it from too much snow. Not knowing where to go, they walked aimlessly about the streets. Nowhere could they find a single soul.

"They must all be at the factories," Johnson said.

"And the children?"

"In schools and nurseries."

"But they can't all be in factories and schools," protested Weaver. "There's nobody home or in the streets. Nuladly!"

"Let's look into a factory," Millet suggested.

In the center of the city they found two factories. Both were of tremendous size, stretching for many times the size of a city block. From their mighty stalks stretched black layers of smoke. A strange feeling of age hung about the factory. The windows were unwashed. Here and there great cracks were in the walls and through them one could see the working men within. The dull roar of the two factories was almost deafening.

"How old it seems!" Weaver gasped.

"Cautious!" Millet whispered.

"Come on!" Johnson said boldly, "We won't get anywhere gaping like that. Let's go in this one here."

They walked through the aged gate, into the courtyard, and up the wide steps to the door. They opened it, walked in and almost at once were drowned by the clanging and banging of machinery in operation. But above the roar of the machines there was yet another sound—the sound of a man's voice, amplified so that it was a booming monotone, overwhelming even the shrill screeches of drills and power tools.

"... be careful. Always be careful," the booming voice in the factory rang out. "Do not make mistakes. Efficiency counts above all else. Efficiency! Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully and enjoy your work. Enjoy your work. Enjoy your work because it is your work. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves . . ."

And on it went, repeating over and over again the same advice to workmen, urging them to greater efforts and constantly giving them an added impetus for faster and faster work.

"Speed-up, duhuh!" Millet said. "What a system!"

Inside the factory they saw the working men and women and chil-

dren. There were thousands of them. Like automata each leaped forward at his task. Dynamos and power engines, placed in floors beneath the level, puffed into life and the conveyor belts moved on. The place was a roaring factory in full blast. Giant cranes scurried along, carrying in their iron hands heavy machines which were placed in position by the waiting workmen. Long lines of closely clad men and women stood by the conveyors, each with his or her task. Some of the men handled the delicate tools. Others, the women and the children, did nothing but watch and sometimes help when a moving mass of machines on the belt rammed and shook as it rolled on a bumpy part of the conveyor. Immediately they would run to it, push it back upon the belt and then go back to their positions, their eyes intent again upon the older men and the older women who handled the drills and who placed the parts in position.

The three walked along the conveyor belts, surprised that no one stopped them to ask who they were and what they were doing here. They ignored the monotonously chattering voice that boared above them, seeming to come from microphones hidden in the roof.

Slowly Millet, Weaver and Johnson began to get the complete picture of the strange factory. Huge boxes were brought in from the outside, obviously from the second factory, and were unpacked. The machinery and parts were assort and distributed. Motors were sent to one place, guides, wires, steel plates and glass to other places.

The trio followed the distribution from one end to another. By the time they reached the center of the plant they realized what was being made. At the end of the factory, ready to be rolled out, they saw it.

In the center of the huge, open, unrolled dome, final finishing touches being placed upon its wings, stood a giant bomber.

"*W*arplanes!" Millet shouted to Weaver, trying to make himself heard above the din of the factory. "Giant warplanes!"

"Why hasn't anyone stopped me?" Weaver asked as they strolled under the wings of the bomber and out into the open air. "Nobody ever looked at me while we walked through the whole plant."

"Suppose they're too busy," Johnson grunted.

"Did you see the children?" Weaver asked again. "Even children! What a factory! It's like a tomb!"

"Efficient though, isn't it?" Millet smiled. "They're getting the bombers out fast enough. Let's see where they take them."

They watched a crew of men roll the bomber out of the hangar-like opening. They pushed it half way to the open field and then left it there. Another crew, coming from the second factory, marched to it and then rolled it on—to the second plant. The three men followed.

Once they were inside the second plant with the bomber they saw a strange sight. The finished bomber was rolled on to the center of a scaffold-like structure and the careful work of disassembling and tak-

ing apart the giant plane began. The wings were carefully taken off, each individual plate tagged and numbered. Not one screw was wasted. Nothing was lost.

"I'll be damned!" Johnson said, astonished.

The three men gathered around and watched. There could be no doubt as to what was being done. The bomber, just finished, was now being taken apart. Its component parts would be packed and sent to the first factory where it would be rebuilt.

"An insane vicious circle!" Weaver said.

"They must be crazy!" Johnson said. "There's no sense in that!"

He stepped forward and seized one of the workmen by the shoulders.

"Hey you!" he shouted. "I want to talk to you! What's going on here?"

The man reacted and tried to get back to his position. When Johnson would not let go he turned quickly and struck at Johnson with his wrench. Johnson yelled a cry of searing pain and let go. The man immediately went back to his spot by the plane as if nothing had happened.

"Dammit!" Johnson shouted to Millet and Weaver. "He struck me! He's crazy! They're all crazy!"

"In a way," Millet said shrewdly. "Yes. But let's get out of here fast."

They left the factory and entered one of the nearby homes where the glowing warmth of the fireplace soothed them.

"All right, Millet," Johnson said. "You seem to know the answer. What's wrong with the city? Everybody seems to be mad. They won't do anything. They just work—work—work! That's enough to drive anybody mad!"

"And the rhythm!" Weaver said. "That mechanical voice in each factory roaring over and over again—work—work—work! Be careful! Be careful! Be careful! What is it all?"

"It's our heritage," Millet said cryptically.

"Heritage? What heritage?"

"Do you remember your history? The story of the Second World War and even the Third?"

"Of course. Of course," Weaver said. "But this mad city—what has that to do with the wars that took place two centuries ago?"

"Two centuries!" Millet said. "That's it exactly! For more than two hundred years, that factory has been building bombing planes for a war that ended two hundred years ago!"

"You're crazy yourself!"

"Crazy, eh? Not as crazy as the facts of history!" Millet said. "Do you remember the bombings of the Third World War? Wave after wave of enemy planes came, blowing up the factories and industrial centers of the enemy. Coventry, Hamburg, Detroit! All of them

smashed to bits! When industrial centers were smashed by air-raids, what is the logical answer? Build factories and plants in out-of-the-way places, far from the arm of the airplane!"

"I suppose you'll say that's how this factory was built?"

"Yes! And perhaps there are still more throughout the arctic Cities of living steel, still sucking bombs and bombers after all these centuries. They started something that they could not finish. They'll keep on building those bombers till the machines are worn out and become that!"

"But the people—the people?" Weaver protested.

"The people!" Millet snorted. "Did you hear the phonograph droning over and over again: you must work—you must work—you must work! Over and over again for two hundred years! It enters into the blood. The child is born and hears those words, you must work—you must work—you must work! He spends his days in the factory—watching and watching until the day that his father dies. Then he too goes up to his position—working—working—working. Not knowing why, nor caring to know!"

"But the same planes are taken apart!"

"One factory was built for producing planes. Another for dismantling the wreckage of planes that were shot down or brought in from the outside. This went on for generation and generation until it became mechanical. And when contact with the outside world finally died, what was more natural than that the process should continue? And it goes on—and on—and on!"

"But what of the food, what of their supplies and clothes and power?"

Millet shrugged and gestured vaguely. "There are some smaller factories on the other side of the city. They must be bakeries and auxiliary plants. Grain, supplies . . . supplies were had in from the seaports to last for hundreds of years. These cities expected isolation. They were places of perpetual siege."

A shiver went down Weaver's spine.

"Horrible!" he said.

"Something must be done about it!" Johnson said, intelligent.

"What?"

"Stop the factory! Flood their source of power—shut it off!"

Millet laughed. "The men would die! They'd go raving mad! You can't stop a thing that's been in the blood for two hundred years! Touch the power plant and they'd rip you to pieces like a wild animal whose food you try to steal!"

"There must be somebody in the city who is intelligent and who has not become a machine," Weaver said. "From the beginning there was some master, some commander who guided things. His descendant might be here. Find him."

"Yes," Millet said, "there might be one someplace."

"Well! Well!" Johnson shouted, "what are we waiting for?"

It was evening and a shrill whistle broke the darkness. The rumble from the factory died down. The conveyor slowed and stopped and the smoke no longer ascended from the chimney.

Long streams of tired men and women walked dully from the factory. Their thin, gaunt bodies moved slowly over the cobbled snowy streets. Their eyes were misty and each one was stooped as if upon his shoulder the weight of the factory was set.

The three men entered one of the houses. Wordlessly, the woman of the house set three more chairs by the table and placed three more dishes upon it. They ate with the family in silence, and when night came they went to sleep by the fireplace.

In the morning they awoke and followed the family as they dressed and had breakfast. When the whistle of the factory blew the family slowly filed out onto the street where hundreds of other families passed them in the procession towards the factory. Wordlessly, Millet, Weaver and Johnson mingled with the people, constantly alert for an eye that was not dull, for a face that had more than a blank stare. But it was the same with everyone. Dull—blank—mechanical—living dead—living machines.

They gathered in long lines outside the factory, and when the second whistle blew they marched slowly in.

The three men watched them go and when all had entered they followed. But instead of entering the plant itself, they walked into all the smaller rooms, hoping to find some clue to the mystery.

On the third floor of the factory, quite by surprise, they found her. The door of a room was slightly ajar.

"There's some rooms here," Millet said, "let's take a look."

Someone inside must have heard them. The door suddenly closed. Millet walked up to it and tried to open it, but it was locked.

"Strange," he said, "the door was open a moment ago."

With his shoulder he pushed tentatively. The wood was old and worn. He stepped back and crashed into the door. It splintered and fell. Millet and the two men entered the room.

Amazed, they stared at the young girl who stood alone, back to the wall, facing them. Her eyes and face did not bear that dull look which characterized every single person in the city. Each movement of hers was cat-like and nervous as she moved along the wall further away from them.

"Hello," Millet said softly.

"A voice!" she said, "You speak!"

"Yes, of course we speak," Millet said, walking a bit towards her. "Don't be afraid. We won't hurt you."

"You—you're from the Outside!" she said, fearfully.

"We're friends," Millet said. "We won't hurt you."

"How did you get here?" she asked suddenly.

"By airplane. We crashed . . ."

"Airplane! Bomber!" she said, her voice becoming high pitched till it was almost a scream. "Then it's true what the books said! You've come here to kill all of us! You came here to destroy the factory! You came here to stop the machines! It's you who wanted the war!"

"No, No," Millet insisted, "We are not going to do anything. Nothing, you understand, nothing. There's no war going on. No war."

"No war!" she cried, "there's always war! Always! The Day will come, my father told me and his father told him. There's always war! ALWAYS! THE DAY HAS COME!"

She pressed herself against the wall, shivering in terror, her knees weakening until she knelt in the corner. Two tears rolled down her cheeks and then sobs shook her body.

"Crazy as a loon," Johnson whispered. Millet bent down and tried to soothe her.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said softly. "We're not going to do anything. Everything's all right. Just stop crying."

She kept on sobbing and then, her confidence won, Millet put his arms around her until her sobs died down.

"This beats everything," Weaver said, scratching his head.

A few minutes later the three men and the girl sat around the desk. Her face was still wet with tears, but her fear was now gone.

"What's your name?" Millet asked.

"I have none," she said.

"You were born here?"

"Of course!"

"What do you do here?"

"Nothing. I'm the governor of the factory."

Millet suppressed a smile and continued. "Why does the factory run?"

"Everybody knows that—to make airplanes."

"But all the airplanes are taken to the other factory where they are simply taken apart! What's the sense to that?"

She looked at him as if not understanding the question. He repeated it.

"Because," she said, "because we've always done so. That's all. Everybody knows that!"

"But why? Why?"

"I don't know," she said sleepily and irritated. "I don't know!"

"Did it ever," he said quietly, "occur to you to stop the machines?"

She stood up, pale with fright and anger.

"Stop the machines?" she asked, trembling. "Not Nobody can do that! Nobody! The factory must go on! It must! It always went on even when the bombers came. Always! Always!"

She was almost hysterical. Millet soothed her and turned to his friends.

"Now try stopping the machines and see what happens!" he said. "This girl is almost normal, think of the others to whom the factory is their heart and soul by birth."

"You're not going to stop the factory! Not No!" she said, "you can't."

"No," Millet said, "we're not going to stop the factory."

"I always knew," she said softly, "that The Day would come. And it has come! It has come!"

"What Day has come?" Millet asked her. "What Day?"

"The Day when our bombers fly!" she said excitedly. "That Day! I knew it was here when I saw you enter the city!"

"You saw us enter yesterday?" they asked, in great surprise.

"Yes!" she said. "I know. Today is the Day! I told them, the workmen, that they should let the bombers fly!"

"Fly?" Millet asked. "Body Soul! But where? Those bombers fly blind. Their destination was set into the controls over two hundred years ago! Even the moment that they drop their bombs is all set!"

"To the enemy!" she said. "They'll bomb his cities! Smash his factories! Destroy his roads and communications! Destroy him!"

Leaving her alone the three men rushed to one of the windows and looked out upon the open field. The day before it was empty. Now, upon its white level, were three huge black bombing planes.

"They mustn't fly!" Weaver said. "Heaven only knows upon what cities they'll drop their bombs! What a ghastly thing! Ghosts from the past destroying the cities of today!"

Weaver and Johnson rushed to the door but Millet soon called after them.

"It's too late!" he said, "they're leaving!"

It was true. From the window they could see the whirling blades of the propellers as each bomber slowly moved along the runway and up into the air.

The three bombers, like three strange birds, rose high and flew away over the mountain-tops.

In Millet's mind there was a strange thought. Three black bombing planes, relics of the past, were bearing a glorious new city founded upon peace. What a mockery!

But perhaps the planes would never reach the city. Two hundred years had passed. Perhaps the controls were worn. A weaning of a hundredths of an inch and the three bombers would miss their mark.

Perhaps—but the three planes were already lost in the mists of the clouds. Even the roar of their motors had died away.

After two hundred years the Day had come.

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